

丈月城
Illustration
シコルスキ



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カンピオーネ！ V 剣の巫女

丈月城

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定価 [本体600円+税]

草薙護堂は神殺しである。



世界に七人しか存在しない魔王・草薙護堂が、来日したリリアナの過剰な世話焼きに困惑していた頃、日本初の王に、イタリアの魔術師が侍ることに危機感を覚えた者たちがいた。彼女たちを排除するべく遣わされた、新たな媛巫女・清秋院恵那は、祐理と護堂の仲を進展させようとする一方、天叢雲剣を振るい、エリカに戦いを挑むが!?



丈月城

Illustration

シコルスキー

剣の巫女

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十
Campione V





「ひすれ護堂の手で
脱がせるはずのものよ?」

「どんなんの
言つてみて
がいがいか★

「天叢雲剣よ。

願わくば我が身を贊とし、
荒ぶる御靈を鎮め給え」

言靈が巫女の唇より洩れ出る。

傍く敬虔なささやき。

そして、その瞳に宿る

凶猛な殺氣と闘志。

エリカはくずおれた。

全身に力が入らず、

呼吸もせわしなくなる。

このままでは斬られる。

ゆっくりと歩み寄る

清秋院恵那と

天叢雲剣を見つめながら、
エリカは絶望しかけた。

今の弱った体で打てる手は――。

必死で考えても、妙案は浮かばない。

どうしようもないのか。



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丈月 城

Illustration

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剣の巫女

セイバーライブ

Campione V



Prologue

Erica Blandelli was a girl who stood out extraordinarily.

With reddish blond hair that glittered like a crown and dazzling looks, combined with perplexing volume that showed a balanced sense of beauty, and she still wasn't even fully developed yet. That combination ended up getting attention wherever she went.

Furthermore, she was from abroad.

In this secluded island country, that was reason enough to attract people's stares.

Then again, in the neighborhood in Aoyama where she was right then, there were far more foreigners than elsewhere. It was only a little bit, but you could say the usual cause for her radiance wasn't in effect as much.

It was past ten at night. She was sitting in an open air cafe along the Aoyama Dori^[1].

Wearing leather pants that matched with the jersey, Erica was waiting for her appointment.

September had only just begun. If it were noon, she'd be wearing sunglasses right about now. While showing off her 160-something cm tall body with a beauty that didn't lose to a model's, Erica was idly spending her time.

"I am very sorry for making you wait, Erica-sama."

"You certainly did, Karen. Such a mistake is unlike you."

Erica elegantly replied to the person who showed up late.

Karen Yankowski.

She was the personal maid for Liliana Kranjcar, Erica's rival.

But right now she wasn't wearing her usual maid dress, but a camisole and a short-sleeved cardigan. She could as well be on her way to go out at night.

"I was caught by Liliana-sama on my way out. She wanted to know where I was going..."

"I assume you managed to put her in a box?"

"Without any hitch. We are talking about Liliana-sama here. You can say coaxing her is no more than child's play."

The women denouncing their old friend/rival and Mistress, respectively, exchanged malicious smiles.

The two women from Europe splendidly showed what many Japanese would see as a well-acquainted relationship. In short, they were like two happily plotting villains.

"You're a bad girl, Karen. Very reliable."

"You're flattering me, but compared to you I still have a long way to go, Erica-sama... so then, this is the promised item."

Karen put a batch of copy-paper on the table.

The girl also known as [Diavolo Rosso] took it with graceful delicacy and checked its contents.

It was the latest edition of the literature that Liliana had been writing since a few years back.

It contained love stories, poems, and her occasional thoughts. Karen stealthily copied them and Erica purchased them for a high price. Currently, they had business transactions like this taking place exactly once a year.

"Oh Lily... this time you've become even more of a poetic maiden..."

"Ohh, but this is because she's experiencing the season of love for the first time in her life. There's nothing she can do about it... ohh, doesn't this topic cause you a bit of discomfort, Erica-sama? I am very sorry."

Erica just shrugged her shoulders to Karen's nonchalant talk.

It wasn't a pleasant topic, but she was neither honest nor careless enough to let it show on her face. Until the end, she kept a very elegant attitude, alluding to a subtle cynicism.

"I don't care about what you did in Naples anymore. I just won't show any more gaps that will be taken advantage of... By the way, Karen, do you

really think Lily has a chance of winning that certain person over from me? This is not a sword duel, you know?"

"That certainly is a pending problem, but, well, I am with her in this," Karen said, half admitting Erica's point. "What Liliana-sama lacks, the staff around her just has to make up for... And mostly, you are extremely unfair in this regard, Erica-sama. Apart from your magical prowess and political strength boosted by your fascination as a woman, you are also very intelligent. Couldn't you give us a handicap?"

"What do you want me to do about it? All of that is what makes me Erica Blandelli."

Erica calmly smiled at both the compliment and the complaint.

"Ahh, but if you're going to compliment me like that, please also praise Godou's good luck of chancing upon a woman like me. He has no idea, but he really is one blessed fellow!"

"Godou-sama, you say? ... Is it possible that that gentleman likes women who make him spoil them?"

"I'm sure he doesn't hate them, why do you ask?"

"Nothing; Liliana-sama was so proactive and yet it didn't appear to leave a big impact on his emotions. So I thought, rather than being proactive, self-assertive women, maybe a selfish woman who makes him spoil her... If he has reached that level at his young age already, I can see him become a considerable playboy in the near future," Karen said in deep thought. She was probably thinking about how Liliana was behaving lately.

Erica laughed silently and showed a victorious smile.

"No matter how proactive she is, if she says she does it "as a knight~~", that blockhead will take it at face value. If you put *those two* together just for a while, they might get better..."

"Ahh, are you talking about that Japanese miko^[2] Right, speaking about miko..."

Suddenly Karen changed the topic.

"Hime-Miko"^[3]... just what kind of people are they? There was also that something-or-other-committee. The Japanese magic associations seem to be quite peculiar."

For a European magician, such an impression was only natural.

Erica nodded. The associations the girls belonged to were "Copper Black Cross" and "Bronze Black Cross".

Both these associations were based in Milan, Italy, and were noteworthy on an international level.

At least one association existed in every current and historical major city, and they formed the world of magicians, different from the public society. That went without question in Europe.

However, Japan had few magic associations.

Most of them were sects rooted in Buddhism, but they didn't gather in the cities.

The magicians living in the cities didn't create their own associations, but were organized and regulated by a state-controlled group called "History Compilation Committee". And then there were the hime-miko in question.

"Let's see. Yuri has gone to Europe a lot, so there are people who know about her, but... the truth is that her involvement in the group called 'Hime-Miko' isn't very well known. You see, apparently the 'hime-miko' are scouted from families amiable towards the History Compilation Committee and receive a special education to make the most of their spiritual powers."

There wasn't much information on hime-miko. Its spread was probably controlled by the History Compilation Committee.

Even with the power of an association like the "Copper Black Cross", details such as their numbers or what kind of spiritual power each one held were not clear yet.

"Probably, the trick that brings forth new hime-miko lies in their lineage. I believe the Committee always keeps track of those families that easily produce people with exceptional spiritual powers; the Committee also observes and protects them so that their bloodlines don't die out. During

that process, those with greater spiritual powers are selected as hime-miko... something like that."

It was easier for girls than boys to manifest special spiritual dispositions such as spirit vision.

In Europe, it was the same with those who held the qualities of a "witch". The point was, the chance to hold exceptional dispositions was higher for women.

"You mean, there are people with special abilities like Yuri Mariya scattered all about?"

"It appears there aren't 'that' many, but at least a few. According to the information I have gotten hold of, Yuri Mariya seems to be considerably high-ranked even among hime-miko."

Erica certainly had not just played around during the three months she had been in Japan.

Although she couldn't skip school much due to Godou's nagging, as a knight serving a campione, she had seen to various arrangements and investigations.

Putting the copy-paper she had come for into a bag, Erica stood up.

Karen bowed respectfully with a composed expression.

"Thanks as always. It really helps me out to have such a generous business partner."

"It's only natural to pay a proper price for such excellent commodities. Although I would gladly pay even more if important information about the [Bronze Black Cross] comes along with it."

"Your feelings alone are more than enough. I don't want to be purged as a traitor yet."

She would stop at the least possible danger, when it could still be settled as an amusing tale. That was what Karen wanted to say.

At her valid reply, Erica responded with a ladylike smile.

That was the type of the people Erica liked to maintain long-term business relationships with. After all, those who didn't know their own limits could fail when others least expect it.

In that regard, Karen was Erica's ideal accomplice, for she would be able to supply Erica with her mistress' personal information for a long time to come.

"I see. Then, see you some other time. Ahh, if you have any other interesting information on Lily, I'll pay a lot for it as well."

"Understood. If I come upon such a thing, I will certainly contact you. Good night."

Sent off by Karen, Erica left her seat.

The night was long. There were still many things that she had to do.

In the end, it was nearly 3am when Erika was in the vicinity of her home again.

There were no strong magic associations in Tokyo. However, there were quite a few wizards.

After parting with Karen, Erica headed to a certain hotel and took part in an auction they held in a room there. It was a secret meeting where focuses and grimoires were sold on a large scale.

Some items seemed like they would be confiscated right away if the History Compilation Committee were to find them.

Erica was participating because she hoped she might get her hands on a rare fetish, and for her goal of making personal connections with magicians unrelated to the Committee.

There were no valuable goods so she did not buy anything, but her other goal went well.

This was another night where she had made her name and face known.

It had been three months since she came to Japan. Apart from being the genius magician who came from Italy, she was also the lover of a devil

king, a campione. By now, there weren't many people 'in the business' in Tokyo who still did not know of her.

After getting out of the taxi, Erica walked up the short path to her mansion. The night had gotten late and there were no signs of life whatsoever.

Nevertheless, Erica stopped in her tracks, feeling an unpleasant presence. Sixth sense... did not nail it. It was due to a smell mixed into the nightly air.

A faint smell of iron stimulated her nose. Immediately after she felt it, the attack came.

Cutting the air, a lump of iron came flying.

Swords.

The gently curving blades belonged to refined, old-style Japanese swords. However, there were no handles. The four swords were welded together at the base.

The curvature grew stronger as it traversed down the blade, forming something like a swastika symbol^[4]. Although there was nobody holding the strange sword, it was floating in midair and continued to attack her while rotating at high speed.

Erica immediately jumped away and used magic to call forth her magic sword.

Cuore Di Leone.

The lion's magic sword had an elegant, slender blade and shone with a cool and clear silver radiance.

With it, Erica tried to knock down the swords flying in the air. However, her strike was returned by the swastika. The blades rotating like an electric fan sent Cuore Di Leone flying from its wielder's hands.

Erica had been disarmed.

The swastika sword attacked right away.

However, with a magnificent smile decorating her lips, Erica started reciting.

"Arges, Steropos, Brontes. Bestow thy blessing of lightning upon my sword!"

At that moment, Cuore Di Leone, which had been knocked high up into the air from her hands, gave off purple sparks.

There was a flash descending from the heavens.

The magic sword that held the name of the lion was draped in lightning as it swooped down and pierced the swastika from above.

This time it pierced the centre, where the four blades were linked together, without being blown off.

The swastika was completely run through. Smashed to pieces, its blades fell to the ground.

"Its structure is too simple to be some kind of golem or gargoyle. So is this a 'Made in Japan' thing after all?"

While muttering, Erica pulled out a handkerchief.

With it, she picked up one of the smashed fragments and tucked it away. It appeared that a new danger was closing in on her - just what she wanted.

With her adventurous spirit stimulated, Erica walked the rest of the way to her home with a light skip in her steps.

Translator's notes & references

1. [↑ Aoyama Doori](#): Main street in Aoyama, Tokyo.
2. [↑ Miko](#): Miko are usually Japanese shrine maidens. However, in this story the term also refers to a type of magic-user, and not all of those magical miko are shrine-maidens. That is why we left the term as miko whenever it shows up.
3. [↑ Hime-Miko](#): Japanese for princess-shrine maiden. It is the name of a group of people and as with miko, we decided to leave it as it is for now.
4. [↑ Swastika \[卐\]](#): do not associate with nazism; see [Eastern Swastika Use \(Wiki\)](#)

Chapter 1 - Omen of a Storm

When talking about shrines in Yushima in the Bunkyou ward, it was usually about Yushima Tenjin^[1].

There was also the famous Kanda Myoujin^[2] nearby. But right now, she was not at such a major place. There was a quiet shrine in the backstreets of Yushima. Usually without a priest or a miko staying there full-time, the parishioners from the neighborhood took turns managing this little shrine.

She opened the door to the cozy front shrine and stepped inside.

People from the vicinity who caught a glimpse of her might have thought it strange.

Because, after throwing open the usually closed door, the female high-school student in a short-sleeved uniform began to roam around shamelessly. But since she wasn't breaking any laws, there was no reason for her to be reprimanded.

Besides, it was currently five in the morning. There were almost no one passing nearby.

"I said I got it, grampsy. Yeah I'm fine, probably... ohh shut it. Well, I've never gone out with a boy before, but... And whose fault do you think that is?"

While sitting courtly in seiza^[3] posture, she was talking fiercely on her cell phone.

Outside, strong winds were blowing violently.

The howling wind kept rocking the shrine as if it was one step short of blowing it away. The sky was covered by dark clouds and it looked about to rain any time.

"Eh, how to seduce a man? ... If you're the one to teach me, it's not going to be of any use anyway, grampsy. You're behind the times at best, you know? I'll study by myself."

With one hand, the girl skillfully unfastened the package on the floor.

A long sword in a black lacquered scabbard appeared. It was her reliable partner, three shaku, three sun, five bu^[4] long.



Right next to it, ten-odd sheets of paper were messily scattered about. It was an investigation report on two girls about her age.

"Leaving that aside, I've found an interesting girl... Yep, right, one of the king's lovers... Yeah, because I don't feel like losing. I'll chase her out of Japan for sure... Yes... Yes yes. Of course I'm ready to use force if it gets down to it. That way's more interesting. Okay, I'll contact you again."

After ending the conversation, the girl picked up one of the paper sheets.

Erica Blandelli. Native of Milan, Italy. Member of the Magic Association [Copper Black Cross], Age 16.

Height 165cm. BWH 87/58/88.

Even a photo was attached to it. It showed an incredibly beautiful girl.

She, Ena Seishuuin, was complacently smiling while looking at the [Diavolo Rosso]'s personal information.

"As an opponent she lacks nothing. This girl will surely allow you and Ena to have some fun."

While calling out to her partner lying on the floor, Ena was looking outside. It had become completely silent.

The violent wind had weakened and the sun rays were piercing the clouds.

"So that wind was grampsy's fault after all... he's such a troublesome grandpa."

After shrugging her shoulders and murmuring, Ena was about to stuff her cell phone into her pocket when she remembered that it was completely discharged. Pausing mid way, she started looking for the battery charger which should be in her bag.

The cell phone Ena Seishuuin had been talking over had had no power source.

In Erica Blandelli's word pool, there was no idiom like "Early to bed, early to rise".

Instead it was the opposite. She'd stay up until late at night and, unless there were other businesses, she'd sleep until around noon.

That was the life-style Erica Blandelli loved.

But, this morning, she abruptly got up from her bed at 5am.

It wasn't like she wanted to enjoy an invigorating morning on a whim.

While rubbing her tired eyes, she picked up the cell phone near her pillow and dialed a number registered in her address book. The other party did not pick up, but she persistently continued.

"What ishh it, Eri--cca, ishh early in the moring. ... is there...aaaa..an emergency...or ssshhing?"

At last her lover, Godou Kusanagi, had picked up.

Probably he wasn't awake either. His voice was blurry.

Usually this was the point where she would present him with a graceful morning greeting and a kiss over the telephone. But right now Erica didn't have the composure for that, so she cut straight to the point.

"Hey, Godou... today you don't need to come pick me up. I'll go to school at noon. It's regrettable that I won't be able to see your face when waking up, but that's how it is..." Erica said with a whisper that lacked the richness her voice usually had.

It was a faint voice, one that gave a very immature impression.

She wasn't a morning person; hence the only one who had the privilege to contact her under such dire circumstances was Godou Kusanagi.

"I don't remember our school having flextime."

"Flextime or not isn't the problem. The problem is that I'm unbearably tired this morning. I won't be able to welcome you like this even if you come. I'll probably be in bed the whole time... Ahh, if you like, you can spend the whole morning in bed with me...?"

Because she was weak in the morning, it was Godou's daily routine to come and pick her up for school.

But even though she called him out of concern over that, she still received a sharp reply in return.

"You know, even if we put the problem with flextime on hold, I don't understand this sudden call early in the morning with neither restraint nor prior arrangement... it wouldn't have happened if you had just used some common sense"

"Because... the two of us need neither restraint nor common sense between us. We have love."

"There are so many things I should say about that, but my head isn't work well yet... I'll tell you later at school. Don't skip."

"Then I'll tell you what I want to say right now. I love you, and, good night," Erica whispered gently and threw the cell phone away.

She stretched out on the bed again, closed her eyes, and returned to her country of sweet dreams right away.

Godou Kusanagi earnestly felt miserable. Waking up early in the morning had been the worst.

He had been struck awake by Erica's call at five 'o clock in the morning.

As a consequence of waking up half-way, he had lost the will to go to sleep again.

With the creed "early to bed, early to rise", Godou always got up right after 6am. So even if he got up at five, it wasn't that hard. But a normal human wouldn't have called him that early in the morning.

He had hoped for Erica to treat people with more common sense.

He melancholically muttered to himself.

He was in Jounan Academy's year 1 class 5 before morning homeroom. However, in the seat next to him, Erica was nowhere to be seen. It seemed she would be late just like her advance notice said.

'Seriously, that girl...' As Godou sighed, the female student next to him started talking to him.

"I do not see Erica. Were you not together this morning?"

"She contacted me saying she'd be late because she's sleepy."

"That girl was saying such things again? She really has not changed since she was a little child! She is always so selfish and not even trying to stick to the rules..."

The angrily muttering girl had her silver hair collected in a ponytail.

Liliana Kranjcar. After leaving her hometown of Milan, the great knight came all the way to Tokyo for him. It was the result of him consenting without thinking it through when she told him 'she'd stay by his side as his knight'.

Before he knew it, Liliana, who had arrived in Japan in the end of August, had decided to study abroad.

She got into year 1 class 5 of the private Jounan Academy, which was his class. During homeroom on the first day, she had suddenly made an announcement.

Even if she was an exchange student from Italy, she had introduced herself in flawless Japanese.

When she was told that her seat was along the windows, Liliana had frowned with a twitch.

And then she declared right after determinedly walking up to Godou's seat:

"To begin, I should first explain: I, Liliana Kranjcar, have someone I have sworn to share my destiny with, to be close with at all times. It is this gentleman, Godou Kusanagi."

She had a magnificent tone of voice; her words spoken like performances from a classical Greek drama.

'What is she saying all of a sudden?'

When their classmates all made expressions that seemed to say that, Liliana had continued her address. That she, who could be called his knight, would constantly be waiting by his side.

"The place I should sit at cannot be anywhere other than by his side. I would like you to think about helping me with my mission and pardon my selfishness."

That appeal had surprised Godou.

No, she was being impossible. He had wanted to remonstrate her, but he was now at a loss for words.

Suddenly the surrounding students had gotten up from their seats and started changing seats to grant Liliana's firm request.

At that time Liliana must have used hypnotism or some kind of magic

Just like that, she had secured the seat next to him, and the class had immediately recognized: On Godou Kusanagi's right sat Erica Blandelli, and on his left sat Liliana Kranjcar; the two beautiful girls which came from Europe surrounded Godou and competed for him with each other.

Liliana was burning with helpfulness towards Godou. Erica nonchalantly interfered with that.

After the day of the transfer, such spectacles would repeat themselves many times. But on this day one of the two in question was absent. It seemed like he would finally be able to spend time calming his heart, so Godou was relieved.

"Godou Kusanagi. Your complexion is not what it should be. Do you lack sleep?"

"I did sleep well, but I woke up at an odd time. That may be why..."

When Liliana suddenly asked him, Godou opted to answer safely. He didn't mention Erica's name out of a knight's compassion.

"Adequate sleep is the basis for a healthy life. Please also pay attention to maintaining your health," she told him with an overly serious expression. Since she certainly was right, he had nothing to refute.

When Godou nodded with a bitter smile, the silver-haired knight sighed.

"This is no laughing matter. Your lack self-awareness as a king is an evident weakness of yours... however, there is nothing we can do about it today. I thought this might happen, so please have some of the coffee I prepared this morning."

With that said, Liliana pulled a thermos flask out of her bag.

'What preparedness!' Godou was a little surprised at the unexpected development.

"How much sugar and milk should I put into it?"

"Ah, please don't put any. Black is fine."

"That is bad for your stomach, I cannot recommend that way of drinking. Well, no helping it now, let us take it one step at a time."

"Ah, okay."

When he accepted the presented coffee, Liliana said without a moments delay:

"It is hot, so please take care. If you don't mind, should I cool it for you?"

"Y-you don't need to go that far..." he perplexedly replied to her, who was leaning forward to blow on the coffee. Ever since this new knight had precipitously joined him, she has always taken on a very polite demeanor.

Coming from a family built on the principle of laissez-faire^[5], Godou had never experienced being taken care of to this degree, not even during infancy.

Liliana scowled at his reserved reply with a stern face.

"This is also my duty as a knight. Feel free to order me as you like. You should become more used to making use of people... What is that! Take your shirt off right away! Quickly!"

"Eh? Why?"

Liliana, her face changing color, drew closer to the wincing Godou.

"Your shirt has become frayed. I need to sew it right away."

"Y-you can leave that much alone."

"It would be my shame if I allowed you to look like that."

In the end, Godou, overpowered by the girl's forcefulness, took his shirt off and handed it to her.

When he was in his t-shirt, he noticed the stares concentrating on him from the surroundings.

Everyone was observing them --- while quietly whispering to each other, while giggling, or while smacking their lips in annoyance. It gave

impressions like 'Get a room!' or 'Eeeek, filthy!' or 'Tsk. That damn Kusanagi... he should just die'.

It was like they were looking at a pimp that did nothing but leech off women.

At that moment, when his dignity as a man was being doubted... Godou finally realized what was going on around him.

Then lunch break arrived.

While heading for the rooftop, Godou was assailed by anxiety.

If he proceeded like that, he couldn't help but feel that he would rush head-on into an even scarier minefield. But since there was still no excuse to escape...

The first to welcome him on the rooftop was Liliana.

"I have been waiting for you... However, since our destinations were the same, could you not have come here together with me?" she inquired in ill humor.

Under her dissatisfied expression Godou's body slightly cramped.

"So-sorry. I went to buy some bread."

"Is that so? That is unfortunate... finally a chance to be alone and progress our relationship..."

When Godou made a suitable excuse, Liliana mumbled away to herself.

"Eh?"

"Ah, nothing. As a knight. Right, because as I knight I must act as your guard. Anyways, let us quickly have lunch!"

While her mouth ran non-stop, Liliana produced a bundle from her bag that looked like a lunchbox.

With handmade sandwiches and fresh juice among other things, no one could object about either its taste or nutrition.

In contrast to the lunchboxes Erica brought, which were carefully prepared by Arianna, Liliana also started bringing handmade cooking every day. Usually they would share the gathered food with everyone, but...

This day Erica was absent. But everyone else still gathered.

Yuri Mariya was from the class next door and his little sister Shizuka specially came from the middle school section.

Would lunch really end safely with this lineup? As anxiety attacked Godou, Yuri timidly asked him a question.

"E-Erica-san is not present today?"

"Yeah, she said she'd come to school today but I guess she's not here yet."

"I... see..." Yuri murmured and fell silent, looking depressed. Then even Godou became restless.

Ever since the events in Naples, his relationship with her had become delicately awkward.

He felt that before the summer holidays, while being reserved around each other, they had become wonderfully close. However, lately it had always been like this, somewhat formal.

If at least Erica were here, she would liven up the place with her ingenious conversation skills.

It was time to do something. While looking at Yuri, who had been plunged into silence, Godou made up his mind. He might be over-thinking matters, but he'd feel bad if the situation went on without him doing anything.

"You need not care about such a selfish woman. Leaving that aside, Godou Kusanagi, I warned you the other day, and yet you still obtained something like that again?" Liliana interjected in ill humor.

"Eh? What are you talking about?"

"I am talking about that. About that obviously nutrient-deficient bread!"

She was staring at the yakisoba bread [6] that Godou bought.

Even among the bread in the store, it was particularly a popular article. The sweetness and saltiness of the sauce surrounding the noodles was exquisite, and it was always sold out within a few minutes after the beginning of lunch break.

That day he had managed to buy two of those popular items. He also purchased an egg sandwich and a croquette sandwich along with them, but in terms or rareness they were no match.

But apparently the knight from Milan disliked this specialty bread that was unique to Japan.

"Combining carbohydrates with carbohydrates is reckless at best. As long as my heart is beating, I shall not permit that kind of crude meal."

And just like that, Liliana confiscated the yakisoba bread. In return, she forced a self-made sandwich onto him.

Roast beef and lettuce, tomatoes, cucumber, avocados, and other ingredients held between toasted rye bread, seasoned with what appeared to be a handmade sauce.

"A meal like this is appropriate for a warrior. Now, please eat up."

"Ahhh. Then, thanks..."

Actually, that day he had wanted to be satisfied by the taste of junk food sauce.

But refusing Liliana's consideration with such a reason would feel awkward.

Godou bit into the sandwich. As a matter of course, it was delicious. It tasted better than the food offered by the cafes in the area. The pickled vegetables that were offered along with the sandwich were outstanding as well.

It wasn't just garnished with the customary cucumber, but carrots and broccoli as well. When he asked, he learned that they were also self-made.

It was a lunch prepared with a lot of time and effort that left nothing to be desired in both taste and nutrition.

However, Godou unintentionally stared at the yakisoba bread, which had been regrettfully confiscated.

"Hey, could you return that to me? I still have room for more..." he tentatively asked. Junk food with an excess of salt and sauce had a charm that was hard to resist after all. As a former athlete, he normally showed

self-restraint; but from time to time the excessive gluttony would overcome him.

"I-I cannot. This was hard, but I confiscated it under consideration of your own good, you know?"

Liliana somehow became flustered when Godou asked.

"E-even if you ask me with such a face, this is out of the question, simply out of the question... But, umm, it is not that I cannot consent to giving you half of it. S-split half of it with me. That would be fine."

"Liliana-san. Please don't change your position so abruptly~" Shizuka said to Liliana as she suddenly came around to agreeing.

Until now, she had been sarcastically watching the exchange between her brother and the silver-haired knight.

"It's shameful to be like a mother going all soft on her child just because he's throwing a tantrum."

She wasn't outright rude, but Shizuka's tone had an obvious thorn within. Minding that, Yuri, who sat across her, softly chided her.

"Shizuka-san, you must not speak like that. Well, I also think that Liliana's behavior is inconsistent, but..."

"C-could you stop with the strange accusations?"

Liliana cleared her throat with a somewhat sheepish expression.

"Shizuka-san, I only acted with appropriate concern towards your older brother. In addition, I presented a compromise to meet his wishes as much as possible. Therefore, Yuri Mariya, all my actions were taken thinking of Godou Kusanagi's well being. In that sense, all of my actions are consistent, I believe."

She was stiffer towards the younger Shizuka than towards Yuri, who was her age.

Liliana made her arguments with that slight difference in attitude.

"In short, that means you've totally caved in against my brother, right?"

"I caved in against Godou Kusanagi? Ridiculous. I am always strict and push high standards onto him. What you said just now was clearly a mistake of the facts," Liliana said as she took out a napkin.

When she suddenly handed it to him, Godou was startled.

"Ahh, this is no good. You have gotten sauce on you. Your dignity and authority will be for naught like this. Okay, it is all right now. You are an unexpectedly troublesome person, hmm?" she said while wiping Godou's mouth.

Although she called him troublesome, Liliana still looked very content for some reason. It was a strange feeling of enrichment, and, from the looks of it, Yuri and Shizuka had awfully cold stares.

"Godou-san."

"Oniichan, I can't believe it. You look like an idiot. You're totally being babied!"

Were these possibly the same reactions that had occurred earlier in the classroom? Exposed to stares that doubted his character and dignity, Godou was horrified.

By the way, Liliana and Shizuka had met for the first time on the last day of the summer holidays.

Saying that her personal arrangements in Italy had finished at last, Liliana had appeared in Nezu^[7] in the Bunkyou ward and went straight to Godou's house for greetings.

At that time, both Godou and Shizuka had been at home, and so was their grandfather Ichirou.

He had instructed her not to reveal information on magicians, knights, or campione to his family, so Liliana hadn't used those words.

Still. *Still*.

"I came to take care of Godou Kusanagi" or "we shall be together forever."

"Our relationship binds us with the same fate; we are one in body and soul" or "I intend to protect him for all our lives" were also unnecessary, Godou believed.

At that time, his grandfather had laughed "Hoho, well well" and gave Liliana a warm reception.

But after she had gone home, he had whispered: "You see, girls like that brood about too many things, so you need to be careful with them. How should I say it; whether they let you live or die is up to you..."

That piece of advice somehow seemed weighed down with meaning. And speak of Shizuka.

"When you vanished off somewhere at the start of the summer holidays, I can't believe you were out catching such a beautiful person! You weren't satisfied with just Erica-san and Mariya-san; no, you had to get a third one?! Oniichan, you're totally like grandpa!"

Just like that, she had become exceedingly hotheaded. 'Little sister of mine, don't have weird misunderstandings about your brother.' But when he tried to relay that to her, Liliana had objected first.

"Shizuka-san, your words just now are mistaken. Unlike Erika or Yuri Mariya, I do not intend to become your brother's lover. Liliana Kranjcar is a knight that will protect Godou Kusanagi until the end, living my life alongside him... that is the purpose of my existence."

"L-lover!?"

"Liliana-san, please stop using such strange words!"

As Yuri interjected, Shizuka also winced at the term, one not usually used by modern middle and high school students.

But Liliana's face remained calm.

"Am I wrong, Yuri Mariya? I have already recognized that as what you are waiting for."

"That is not true! That very idea is a misunderstanding!"

"I see... Well then, if you say you have no ambition to become his lover, please refrain from excessive meddling. As it is my duty, I shall earnestly remain in waiting by Godou Kusanagi's side. I would like you to not interfere."

Faced with Liliana's decisive words, Yuri became flustered.

While Godou grew worried as he listened next to her.

If the usually reserved Japanese miko and the Milanese knight with her passionate sense of duty continued to diverge like that, it would definitely leave a bad aftertaste. He should settle matters before it came to that.

"Hey, Liliana, don't be so stiff. Mariya only says that because she's worried about us. It's nothing to be so hard on her for."

Matters like these should be resolved before they take deep roots.

Maybe it was because he had been the captain when he was still playing baseball, but Godou had gotten used to this sort of problem. It wasn't necessary to be excessively friendly among teammates, but discord hidden in the shadows were not good.

Especially if a girl like Yuri was involved, he wanted to be considerate.

"Godou-san..."

"I'm sorry, Mariya. You also understand that Liliana meant no harm, right? I'll make sure she's careful from now on, so don't take it to heart", Godou said to Yuri, who looked at him rather happily.

"Y-yes. I don't particularly mind."

"Okay, great. Lately I've always seemed to make you angry... sorry. I've been waiting for the right time to apologize, but there were no chances and..." he gently smiled at her. He felt this was a chance to try and fix his relationship with Yuri.

This miko had a really nagging streak, but it was all out of consideration for him. If he wasn't thankful for that, he'd incur divine punishment.

If he could, he'd like to stay on good terms with her for a long time to come.

"I should be the one to apologize deeply. After seeing how well Godou-san and Liliana-san got along lately, my chest grew strangely nauseous gave me dark thoughts... I also thought I should improve my attitude."

"Ahh, so you felt the same. True, you've been cold to me lately, huh, Mariya?"

"Please! Don't tease me like that!"

Yuri suddenly turned her face away. It was unusual for her, but she was pouting.

After seeing that, a relieved Godou turned around towards Liliana next. If he managed to gently finish the matter now... Even so, she frowned at him, her expression full of amazement.

"I am impressed, Godou Kusanagi... How you handled the upset Yuri Mariya just now revealed quite the skill. I should have expected no less from someone who became renowned for his dirty interests at such a young age."

'Seriously, you are only smooth at times like this...' Liliana grumbled.

"Hey, what do you mean with 'handle'? Don't make me sound like a weirdo!"

"There is no need to justify yourself. No matter how much you lust after women, even if the worst happens and you invite destruction upon yourself, at least I will be your ally... Indeed, I had already taken that amount of trouble into account when I precipitously joined you."

That line invited way too many misunderstandings. Sensing danger, Godou was about to chide her, but it was already too late.

"Liliana-san. What was it you just said? About Onii-chan and dirty interests?"

"I meant it as I said it. You seem to be aware already, but your big brother has pledged love with quite a number of women, and he is very accomplished when it comes to enjoying that love."

"Wait, Liliana, don't make up fishy stories!"

"Onii-chan, you stay quiet. Liliana-san, please continue," Shizuka interrupted Godou's protest and urged Liliana to go on.

Liliana answered her question somewhat dejectedly.

"Yes. The truth is, I also fear that your brother will suffer one day due to this bad habit. When I think of wicked women like Erica being so close to him..."

"Aren't you right~ Many people fell to ruin due to womanizing, right~"

Shizuka, who agreed in her responses like this, also threw harsh looks at Liliana. Her countenance seemed to say 'you're also one of his playmates, aren't you?"

"But Shizuka-san, please stop blaming your brother's present sense of virtue. Since times immemorial, great men have always had great fondness for sexual pleasures. The fact that nothing but beautiful maidens gather around Godou Kusanagi is, in a sense, proof of his qualities. You should not scold him so much over such a minor matter."

"Hmmm? So that's how you think about it?"

"Yes. In short, we simply need to avoid situations where he loses his way due to women. And seeing to that is my duty, who is in waiting by his side. I shall protect your brother without fail. So, Shizuka-san, if you could please be more tolerant?"

"Onii-chan, aren't you lucky. Liliana-san understands even your womanizing." Shizuka uninterestedly ignored Liliana's admonishment. Trying to follow their conversation left Godou quite perplexed.

"So, you're saying Onii-chan doesn't need to reflect on his behavior?"

"No, I cannot state that with certainty. Even as a playmate, he should probably avoid Erica. In Yuri Mariya's case... it depends on her behavior from now on. From my point of view, he should aim for women that cause less trouble in the future," Liliana said and directed her judging gaze at the hime-miko, who was blessed with beauty in both expression and physique.

Yuri reacted with bewilderment.

"Hey, isn't this going in a strange direction!?"

"No. I believe the direction is correct. If you do not correct your womanizing attitude, there will be people who seek to make use of it later."

"Li-Liliana-san, aren't you saying a tiny little bit too much..."

A sour-looking Godou was faced with a composed Liliana and Yuri, who had taken a complete turn from her earlier attitude to the defensive.

These three were cynically watched by Shizuka.

"Mariya-san is all over you just because you were a little nice to her. Liliana-san is open to your affairs and ready to recognize them. If one of them becomes your wife, you won't even need to go through all the trouble grandpa did. Isn't that great for you, Onii-chan."

He wasn't in control anymore. It was just then when Godou looked up at the sky in resignation.

"A pleasant day to you, everybody. It seems to be very lively and fun here. Hello, Godou, I couldn't tell you this morning, but instead I'll tell you right now with lots of affection included. I am really happy to be able to see you."

Someone greeted them in a self-serving tone.

While radiating elegance and grace, Erica showed herself on the rooftop. Even the school's summer uniform looked like it was custom-tailored for her.

It was because of her inner values that let this girl shine, even surpassing her superficial beauty.

"Oh, I thought something has happened, and looking at your faces I can pretty much guess."

While looking at everybody around her, Erica radiantly asked her old friend and rival: "Lily, please give me a sandwich, too. I've only had a cappuccino today so I'm starved."

"Th-there is a lot of other food. Even if it is not mine..."

"But it's made by you, isn't it? And it looks to be the most delicious. When you have room to choose, choosing the most delicious or interesting one is my principle. You know that, right?"

"You are as selfish a girl as always!"

Liliana sounded abusive, but when she heard the praise "delicious", she held out the package of sandwiches, seeming not as annoyed as she would have others believe.

Erica accepted one with the beautiful smile of a lady and turned her eyes to Yuri.

"I'm glad for you, Yuri. You managed to make up with Godou, didn't you? Ever since the summer break, you've been completely awkward; it was painful to look at. Please allow me to congratulate you."

"Ah, yes. Thanks to you I somehow..."

Erica had done nothing at all, but the overwhelmed Yuri thanked her.

Then she turned to Shizuka and continued courteously and sociably: "Shizuka-san, I know that you are irritated but please let it slide already. At the beginning of the 2nd school term, it had been so long since I had gotten to meet Godou that we ended up overdoing it. Look, he was with you for all of August..."

"U-using that as a reason"

"Godou told me, you know, that he'd spend the rest of the holidays with his little sister, so he couldn't meet me as much. It was sad, but being with one's family was also important, so I bore with it. I wouldn't call this return for that, but could you let this pass? Please...?"

Certainly, he hadn't met Erica very much during August. She had excused herself for being busy with work for the magic society [Copper Black Cross] and had apparently been bustling about all over the place. At that time, he had also been distant with Yuri, and Liliana had only arrived in Japan at the very end of the holidays.

So they hadn't met not because Godou had asked them, but...

"I-is that so, Onii-chan? Is that why you accompanied me?"

"Uhhm, what should I say..."

"Don't be shy, Godou. Weren't you worried that you weren't looking after your little sister enough?"

"I see... Ohh Onii-chan, it's embarrassing how you can't bear being away from me," Shizuka said somewhat happily, sharply turning her head away. It was unknown if the excuse just now had worked, but it looked like the danger had passed.

Thereupon Erica made a declaration to everyone present with a radiant smile on her face.

"Then, now that the arguments are settled, let us go back to lunch. Meals should be held cheerful and fun. We must choose an appropriate topic."

Following her lead, everyone sat down on the rooftop floor.

Erica slid into Godou's right armpit quite naturally and sat down right next to him.

Yuri, who had been in that position so far, had handed it over without any thought... That single act showed their power relationship and made Godou secretly groan.

Erica really was dreadful.

Her actions just now were the skills of a [queen] controlling her royal court.

(...Godou. You probably got it already, but with this, the amount of things you owe me for has grown by one. Remember that)

Erica, sitting by his side, quietly whispered to him. Of course Godou couldn't object.

After school, Erica Blandelli and Liliana Kranjcar walked through the shopping district in Nezu, where the Kusanagi's house was located.

Godou had said that he had somewhere to drop by and had gone home right after classes were finished.

Apparently Yuri also had her duties as a miko and had gone home alone.

Erica made her way home while elegantly driving away the boys approaching her as if they were biting lice. But on the way, she spotted Liliana in the shopping district.

"A pleasant day to you, Lily. Are you going to Godou's after this? Well met. I was also thinking about visiting, so let's go together," Erica forcibly turned them into traveling companions.

Liliana frowned unhappily but started walking close to her anyway.

"Erica... I do not think there is any reason for you to go to the Kusanagi house."

She bluntly treated the knight who was her childhood friend and rival as a bother.

"I intend to cook dinner at his house. Since you cannot cook, you will be of no use even if you come along. I would like you to not interfere with my duties..."

So that was it after all. Erica nodded to herself.

Ever since long ago, this girl had the bad habit of not thinking much about how to spend her time and effort. So then, should she chide her, or make fun of her for it?

After a moment of thought, Erica decided that in this situation, she should just do both.

"Oh my, I wouldn't interfere, Lily."

Erica showed off what Godou often called her devil's smile, while masking a quiet laugh.

"While you strive with your cooking, I will happily make conversation with Godou; grandfather and Shizuka-san, as well. I should deepen my ties with my future family, after all."

"Wh-what did you say?"

"Hehee, it might not be necessary for you, Lily, considering that you serve as his knight. But for me it's different. Eventually I will become his wife, and as his wife, I will be in charge his army and castle. I must be on good terms with his relatives.

"W-w-wiiife!? Godou Kusanagi has no intention of taking you as his wife! Can you stop deciding my lord's future by yourself!"

"He just hasn't said it yet. Among ourselves, matters are already settled," Erica declared while following Liliana into the supermarket.

The girl reminiscent of an Eastern European fairy took a shopping basket like it was her second nature.

Contrary to her appearance, this girl had had an affinity for housekeeping since her childhood. Cooking, sewing, cleaning, if it was housework, she

could do it. Erica, on the other hand, had almost no experience with shopping in places like this.

"Hey, Lily. Sometimes I feel pity for you. You became a knight for Godou merely a few months after me, but during that time my relationship with Godou had deepened greatly. So much that you can't force your way in between us anymore."

"Tha-that is not true! The relation between me and him will develop much more from now on!"

"Oh my, really? But, doesn't Godou seem restless every so often? A little bit troubled, like he is squirming?"

Liliana's complexion changed in an instant. It looked like she had a clue. Well, it was only natural since she'd suddenly barged into the Kusanagi house and started cooking, among other things.

Even Godou, who was usually accepting of people's goodwill, was quite bewildered and bothered by her fervor.

"You see, whenever my eyes meet Godou's, I can generally tell what he's thinking. Because our bonds are just that deep..."

"DANG IT! Stop trying to throw my heart out of order, Erica!"

Liliana harshly objected. She was right, of course.

While there were times when Erica and Godou could confirm each other's aims by eye contact, there were also many times where they couldn't. In the end, the environment he was raised in was just too different.

The difference in perception that stemmed from the culture gap wasn't overcome that easily.

But, Erica didn't feel like saying that straight-out.

At times like this, it was better to enforce her will with a bang. She had the courage and persuasion power to make lies seem true, so she smiled elegantly and pityingly at Liliana.

"Feel free to think that. While you cling to that blind belief, Godou and I will deepen our relationship even further."

"Ug, talking so frivolously..."

"So, could you please not make supper for Godou today?"

Erica continued nonchalantly just as Liliana had begun testing a cabbage in the produce corner. So far it had been for amusement, but her next advice was based on calculation.

"He isn't living alone, so outside of excursions, there's no need to cook for him."

"No, but, that's my important work as a knight and"

"Cooking for him at his house is the work of a housewife or a maid. You're neither, right? I understand that you're excited to be by Godou's side, but it's time to calm down. If you keep pressing your kindness on them so forcefully, even his grandfather will be bothered. Understood?"

Erica clearly called out her troublesome old friend.

Apparently Godou had also mumbled to her that she didn't have to go that far, but at that level it wouldn't get through to the overenthusiastic Liliana. She was in love with the ideal of being in love, a maiden predisposed for delusions.

"If you want to put your cooking skills to practice nonetheless, how about making something at your home and sharing it later?"

"Ahh!"

Liliana's eyes flashed open upon Erica's suggestion.

Obviously she had never even thought of that. What a troublesome person.

Still, she had outstanding abilities at her disposal. If this girl was to serve Godou, Erica wanted her to do so without causing needless disturbance. She had to hold her reins tightly.

"Which reminds me; five, six years ago there was that time when you held a party at your home and put your all into the food..."

"Urg! E-Erica, that was in the past!"

"Oh Lily, although there were only five guests, you diligently made food that seemed enough for thirty... you have always been like that. You

pointlessly invest time and effort when you don't need to, right? Whenever that's happened, I've looked after you with perfection, do you remember?

Incidentally, Erica had also backed her up at Liliana's party.

She had called twenty people together in haste and organized a bigger meeting place. It was a dear memory. One that Liliana probably still had but would surely want to forget.

"Che! Well, yes. It is there, in the corners of my memory..."

"I see, great. Let's get along from now on as well, while treasuring the strong ties between the two of us, shall we, Lily?" Erica brightly told the bitterly admitting Lily.

They were equal in sword and magic, but in their private life Erica generally seized the initiative.

To make Liliana easier to handle, she would use this chance to stir those memories awake.

Erica decided that while enjoying her worthy rival's agony.

The two girls left the supermarket without buying anything and headed for the Kusanagi house.

But before they had walked for even three minutes, Liliana asked in a whisper.

"Erica, do you know that girl who has been staring at us for a while?"

"I wonder? I don't remember her face."

They really stood out.

Since beautiful girls, one blond, one silver-haired, and both from abroad, were walking right next to each other, it was a given that they would attract attention.

But the girl's stare, which had focused on them since their time in the supermarket and was now ten meters behind them, had one exceeding characteristic.

It was a look that was evaluating an opponent. A gaze that differed from a normal human's, with eyes that were accustomed to fighting.

She obviously wasn't an ordinary person.

And her eyes revealed the fact that she did not even want to hide it.

"I have only just come to Japan. So I thought she would be your acquaintance."

"By process of elimination. But unfortunately, she shouldn't have any connection with me whatsoever, either. Well, I can't deny the possibility that she knows about me though."

The other girl presented herself without hiding, so responding to her shouldn't be bad.

Erica stopped and turned around. Liliana did the same.

It was evening. Among the crowds in the shopping district.

Moving through the flow of people, the girl in the high school uniform moved closer.

Her long, black hair was silky and beautiful, and her features didn't lose to that either. Her build was slender, but she looked like the type that seemed slimmer in clothes.

But the thing about her that caught the most attention was the long and thin cloth bag over her shoulder.

Something cylindrical and longer than one meter seemed to be wrapped inside. It might be some kind of sword. Erica remembered the swastika sword that had attacked her the night before.

The black-haired girl smiled at them in passing.

It had nothing in common with Erica's refined smile; it was the smile of an opportunist.

Today, she was just making herself known. The girl leisurely passed them as she implicitly communicated that.

The Nanao Shrine was built on a hill close to Shiba Park.

To reach it, one had to first challenge the highest stone steps in the metropolitan area.

For Yuri Mariya, who had no stamina, this was quite a penance. Actually, they also had an elevator that went up and down, but it was out of order. Yet the serious girl did not complain.

She somehow kept on climbing with her wheezing breath.

It was still the hot beginning of September, so she was already completely drenched in sweat.

That was why she purified herself with the showers in the shrine office before beginning her duties.

While soaking in the hot water, she suddenly felt bothered by her own body.

Her smooth, ivory skin was so white it almost seemed transparent.

Her build was slender and scrawny. Her limbs had no muscles to speak of either, and she was so slender she seemed like she would break unless handled with care.

However, she had moderate volume in the proper places like her breasts and hips.

Yuri stopped the shower and left the stall. The bathroom mirror reflected her figure.

When going through water purification with her fellow hime-miko or changing with her classmates, she was always inexplicably complimented and treated with envy.

Maybe she had a body she could be brag about.

She payed attention to her weight and dry skin like any other girl her age, but she had never experienced being too worried about her own figure.

If I can, I want to become more slender. That was about it.

But lately that started giving her a bad feeling.

What floated through her mind this time was the overwhelming physical beauty of Lucretia Zola, whom she had seen on Sardinia.

"Do men find that kind of build more desirable after all...?" Yuri murmured while pretending like she thought of nobody specific.



It was not her build. It was the assertiveness and confidence of those girls that she lacked. Then there was her bad habit of blurting out harsh words.

"Hahhh," Yuri let out a sigh.

Compared to those girls, Yuri Mariya's build and personality was on a lower scale.

Because the DNA she had been born with was different from a European woman's, it couldn't be helped. It was inevitable, but that reasoning did not lighten Yuri's spirits at all.

Maybe, if he preferred beautiful, bold women like that...

'For now, I seem to be winning against Liliana-san'

The thought suddenly came to Yuri's mind as she looked down at her stomach and she started worrying.

"Ahh, what am I thinking about! Dirty! Imprudent!"

Liliana Kranjcar's body was reminiscent of a fairy and like that of a slim model.

In other words, it meant she lacked curves.

Yuri felt she was winning when it came to being feminine. But to use that for comparison, she felt embarrassed that her feelings were so indecent.

In the face of her sacred duty, she mustn't do that.

To clear her head with a cold shower, Yuri returned to the stall in haste.

Having regained some level of calmness, Yuri put on the white robes and hakama^[8] of her miko outfit.

She left the shrine office and headed for the front shrine. While on her way, she exchanged greetings with the priests working in the shrine and the other miko as they passed by one another.

The standing of employed full-time personnel and a hime-miko was completely different.

In the end, a hime-miko was someone with special powers, who was dispatched by the orders of the History Compilation Committee.

They were only dispatched to various important spiritual locations. Because the authority structure was completely different, even the head priest of a shrine could not give orders to a hime-miko. The girls were respected like high-class guests.

Currently, there were about ten hime-miko in service near Musashino in the Kanto region.

One of those comrades was waiting for her at the front shrine.

"Ena-san? What happened? Why are you here today?"

"Hey, Yuri, long time no see. I just thought I'd say hello."

Ena Seishuuin playfully smiled at her.

The girl with beautiful, black hair and noble features had an atmosphere that made her easy to get along with.

She wasn't wearing the miko outfit that Yuri was used to seeing, but a white shirt and a beige vest and skirt. It looked like the uniform of a high school somewhere.

Then there was the long and narrow cloth bag lying on the floor of the front shrine.

The moment she saw it, Yuri gave a startled jump. Its divine power was as fierce as ever.

The cloth bag was woven with a special fabric to block the magical power. But Yuri's spirit sense could still perceive the presence of that divine blade.

"Hey, Yuri, according to the rumors you're currently a mistress for His Majesty, right?"

"M-miiiiis"

At such a blunt question, Yuri was lost for words.

'His Majesty' probably referred to a campione. It was a way of speaking that lacked precision, typical for Ena.

"I'm not! I am not in such a shameless relationship with Godou-san!"

"Ehh, really? I mean, because the committee and the Mariya household offered you as a human sacrifice, everyone else gave up on becoming His Majesty's lover. It's different from what I heard."

She was right. Yuri regretted her verbal slip.

It was a very enticing prospect to gain influence over a devil king, a campione, and make use of him. So to keep a lid on that, they had prepared an excuse.

"T-that is, Kaoru-san and Amakasu-san said we'd act like that on the surface, so I helped them... could you keep this a secret?"

"Ahh, it sounds like a trick those people would pull... Okay, got it," Ena said indifferently.

Yuri was relieved. Ena truly was the greatest hime-miko. In spite of her behavior, Ena Seishuuin had the most outstanding talent and the best qualities not only in Musashino, but in the whole country.

"So, instead of you, I'll just become His Majesty's mistress. Now this is a serious responsibility..."

"Excuse me?"

Yuri stiffened when she heard the sudden proposal. What was she saying, all of a sudden?

"Actually, this time Ena was also made His Majesty's mistress. The head of my family has urgently asked me to. Grampsy thought it was interesting so he also recommended it. Hey, you know, Grampsy? That's why the people from the committee can't say anything either."

"G-Gram, the Old One?"

He was one of the Elders whom not even the Historical Compilation Committee wanted to offend.

Even among the hime-miko, he had taken a special interest in Ena Seishuuin and secretly granted her the divine blade. Yuri had never met him. Probably the only hime-miko to have met him face-to-face was Ena.

"Right. He told me not to lose to you or anyone when serving him, so I felt a bit bad. But it's great you're not his mistress. I really didn't want to quarrel with you."

"You can't! I definitely won't allow that!"

Yuri unintentionally flared up against Ena's grin and her conceited words.

The girl with the alias [Hime-Miko of the Sword] opened her eyes wide at that angry reaction.

"Hm, why? Something bad about it?"

"Th-that is..."

"Apart from having Grampsy's orders, Ena can't go against the committee either, so there's nothing she can do about it. And you're not his mistress, are you? So what's so bad, OH! Ena gets it..."

Suddenly Ena's expression changed to a mischievous smirk.

Yuri's face grew crimson with shame as she looked back awkwardly.

"Hohooh. It's cute how you're getting all shy. So that's it. Ena gets it... Oh, Yuri, you seriously fell for His Majesty?"

"I did not! Please don't make weird accusations!"

"Hehehe. Denying it while blushing to your ears, you really are cute. Why didn't you say so in the first place? Ena is no demon, she's properly thinking about things."

Ena Seishuuin proposed something astounding as she chuckled.

"Alright. Then let's split the roles. Ena will leave the perverted and child-bearing stuff, the work as a woman to you, Yuri. Ena will do the rest. You're fine with that, right?"

"Ehh? Ena-san, what are you...?"

Her fellow hime-miko showed the perplexed Yuri a radiant smile.

"I told you, right, I was ordered not to lose to anyone. It's fine since we're friends, but Ena will drive those other two mistresses out. Let's serve His Majesty, just the two of us!"

Ena picked up the cloth bag lying on the floor.

She opened it and pulled out what's inside. A broadsword, 3 shaku 3 sun 5 bu long, stored in a black lacquered sheath. The intensity of the magical power radiating from the divine artifact made Yuri dizzy.

"For now, Ena thinks she'll start with cleaning up that blond Erica-something-or-other. She seems quite skilled, that girl. Well, Ena's got her strong partner here so she doesn't think she'll lose."

Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi.

The most prominent divine blade in Japan. The power hidden within was unfathomable.

The strife these girls were involving Godou Kusanagi and Erica Blandelli in had only just started for real.

Translator's notes & references

1. ↑ **Yushima Tenjin:** Shinto shrine in Tokyo devoted to Tenjin, a god related to learning. It is frequently visited by the students hoping to pass the entrance exam
2. ↑ **Kanda Myoujin:** Famous Tokyo shrine devoted to two of the fortune gods (Daikokuten & Ebisu), as well as Taira no Masakado, a Heian-era rebel samurai later elevated to an immensely popular god
3. ↑ **Seiza:** Japanese term for the traditional formal way of sitting in Japan
4. ↑ 1 **shaku**=30.3cm, 1 **sun**=3.03 cm, 1 **bu**=3.03 mm
5. ↑ **Laissez-faire:** Principle of minimum interference from a higher power, e.g. from the government in economics: [Laissez-faire](#)
6. ↑ **Yakisoba bread:** Japanese hot dog with fried noodles in the bread
7. ↑ **Nezu:** Nezu is part of the "Ya-Ne-Sen" neighborhood where early 20th century culture still lingers. The name "Ya-Ne-Sen" comes from the first letters of the 3 neighborhoods Yanaka, Nezu and Sendagi. A popular area among foreign visitors to enjoy the traditional Japanese atmosphere full of local color.
8. ↑ **Hakama:** type of traditional Japanese clothing; see [\[1\]](#)

Chapter 2 - Another Chaotic School Day

Tamaura Shrine was located in the section of Yushima^[1] closest to the Kuramaebashi Street^[2].

Ena Seishuuin was greeting a visitor on its grounds.

A few hours have passed since her visit to Nanao Shrine, and it was already evening.

"How do you do, Ena-san. It's been a while. By the way, if you need a shrine, just pick any modest one you like.." said one of her guests, Touma Amakasu.

He was a man in the late twenties, clad in a cheap business suit. He usually ran errands for History Compilation Committee.

But that certainly did not make him an underling. Even amongst the experts from the committee, he was working directly for the Sayanomiya family in all of Kantou^[3]

Facing him was Ena, who had already changed from her school uniform into her miko outfit.

White robes and a red hakama; A broadsword with a mysterious power was concealed in the cloth bag in her hands.

"This shrine is fine. Those places with many people are a pain anyway, and Ama no Murakumo feels more comfortable here as well. Don't worry about it."

"If that's so, feel free to stay. I will take care of the paperwork, so use it as you like."

Ena nodded appropriately at Amakasu's words.

She had already talked to the administrator of this place and gotten the key to the shrine.

She intended to use it as she liked even without being told so. The gods enshrined here were Oinari^[4], Yamato Takeru no Mikoto^[5] and Oto Tachibana no Hime.^[6]

All of them had extraordinary compatibility with the girl and her partner. There was nothing to criticize for a temporary home.

"I heard the story from Yuri-san and the head of the Seishuuins. Yeah, how should I say this..." "Don't meddle'?"

When Ena preemptively interjected with a smirk, Amakusa showed a faint smile.

"You can't be that blunt now, can you? You actually do feel close to the Committee, but since those feelings won't show this time..."

"It's what Grampsy said. Yeah, my sympathies..."

"Thank you. By the way, Ena-san, you've already come into contact with Erica Blandelli and Liliana Kranjcar, haven't you?"

As one would expect, the information had traveled fast. Having no intention of hiding it, Ena admitted right away.

"Well yeah. The idea of assaulting Erica in her sleep last night came up..."

"And you left it at that? A wise judgement. The barrier that great knight of the [Copper Black Cross] raised around her home should provide more than just any normal defense. Although I would like you to refrain even more from interfering with her if possible..."

"Why? Finally Japan has its own king and now some foreign girl is his mistress? Isn't it better to chase her out?"

At Ena's proposal, Amakasu shook his head as though he were disappointed.

"Maybe so during the era of national isolation^[2], but the times have changed. Whether it's the [Copper Black Cross] or the [Bronze Black Cross], they are both extremely powerful magic associations. It might be as you say if they were agents of riffraff organizations, but here..."

"Those girls are troublesome?"

"Yes. It's like laying hands on foreign diplomats. In the worst case it might spark strife between the countries themselves."

Ena understood those feelings well. But she had no intention of changing her plans.

Politics and diplomacy were too complex for her. Fights were more fun when they were simple. Matching blades and competing with true strength; wasn't that enough?

"Uuum, sorry. Granny and the others at my place had asked me to drive those girls out, so I can't just stop now. Fighting it out with her also seems like fun. Well, let's just leave it at that, okay?"

Let's just apologize in advance for now.

Amakasu shrugged his shoulders at Ena's frivolous apology, and her other guest suddenly smiled.

"Your honored grandmother - the directions from the head of the Seishuuins? And your guardian, the Old One, approves as well. It's unlike him to hold an interest in worldly power struggles..."

They were the first words of the third person who had kept her silence thus far.

Kaoru Sayanomiya. As the leader of the Tokyo branch of the History Compilation Committee, she had authority over the Committee in Kantou.

"That's strange. Any idea why the Old Man gave such an order?"

"Who knows? There's no way Ena would know. But even if grampsy looks heroic, he can be unexpectedly wicked. Maybe he's plotting something?"

While happily giving her reply, she showed Kaoru a wry smile.

Kaoru Sayanomiya had a graceful beauty and an aura of being lost in some transient world. There was not an ounce of unnecessary fat on her slender frame.

"You never change, Ena, never bothered about anything. That's really like you."

The expression was a bit affectionate. Her smile was clear and charming.

Her delicate and androgynous appearance defied reality. If you called her a man, she could probably appear as a "gives off no feeling of reality" pretty boy in a shoujo manga.

But Kaoru Sayanomiya had the same sex as Ena. She was one of Musashino's hime-miko as well.

After finishing the fruitless interview with Ena Seishuuin, they left Tamaura Shrine.

As Touma Amakasu walked off, his superior Kaoru Sayanomiya followed next to him.

She was not only the next head of the Sayanomiya family, but also a candidate for the next leader of the History Compilation Committee.

It was fine that she was still a high school third year. There were no complaints to be made about her abilities, either. After all, the problem was her behavior. The crossdressing for example.

She was currently wearing the boys' uniform.

A white shirt with necktie, blazer and pants. Not a pleated skirt, but trousers for boys.

"Still, I wonder why the Elders decided to increase the number of Godou Kusanagi's lovers," Amakasu tossed the question out to his neither male nor female superior.

"Up to now, they never had any complaints against your plan of leaving it to Yuri-san alone, so it feels strange. It will only invite vain disorder, so I'd really like to pass on it..."

"Well, I think they have their own thoughts about this," Kaoru said thoughtfully. At times like these she looked like a dangerously frail beautiful boy, or maybe girl. Even Amakasu who knew her real gender felt that way. Strangers would all the more so.

But if they're increasing the number of lovers around the campione, wouldn't it mean it's okay for all the families to offer their daughters and start a debauched feast? But the Elders sent only Ena. I think that's gutsy."

"So the Elders caved in against pressure from the Seishuuin family," Amakasu grinned broadly.

That was impossible. While being convinced of that, he voiced the complete opposite opinion.

Kaoru probably believed the same thing. As expected, she smiled back evilly.



"There's no way. Just like the Sayanomiyas, the Seishuuins are one of the four families. Especially against the Old One, the Elders can't persist on such selfishness."

"So it's rather that the Seishuuins are being utilized? ...like adorning your cat with a bell?"

"Or possibly sticking insects onto a lion."

The goal of the Elders was probably to provoke some kind of reaction in regards to Godou Kusanagi.

Having matched their opinions, the boss and underling made their way to the car in silence.

Yuri Mariya's mornings began early. She woke up before seven o'clock and went to the kitchen.

Both her parents were employed. Her father worked for a certain restaurant chain (that being said, the proprietor was her father's father, in short her grandfather) and her mother taught and lectured in a teaching school.

It was Yuri's daily routine to make breakfast in place of her busy mother.

On the occasion, she would prepare lunch boxes for herself and her little sister Hikari.

But this morning she made one box too much and left home earlier than usual.

The Mariya family lived in an apartment complex in Toranomon^[8]. Actually, their main house was in the Saitama prefecture, but they used this for easy commuting to work and school.

Getting on the Chiyoda line and debarking at Nedzu Station was her usual routine.

However, this morning she used the Ginza line and got off at Suehiromachi Station. It was to meet Ena Seishuuin. She was informed

the girl used a small shrine in Yushima, so she would come to check up on her every once a while.

With her face flushed red and facing downwards, Yuri rushed to the shrine.

When she opened the unlocked front shrine, she found Ena rolled up in a sleeping bag, lying on the floor.

"E-Ena-san...!"

She hadn't expected her to sleep in the shrine.

While thinking how horrible that was, Yuri called out quietly.

"Hey, Yuri, morning~. That smells nice~, did you bring me a lunchbox?"

Ena suddenly opened her eyes. Her voice was so clear it didn't sound like she had just woken up.

"Y-yes. I brought your share, too, so if you'd like..."

"Of course I do~. You really are sensible, you know~. You're the number one girl I want to make my wife. Good girl, good girl. My praises to you."

While witting like that, the greatest of Musashino's hime-miko opened her sleeping bag.

She got up, immodestly clad only in a tank top and shorts. She looked thinner in clothes, so while slim, her curves were amazing.

Yuri became embarrassed, as the splendor of Ena's body could easily be seen through her thin clothes.

"B-by the way, were you already awake, Ena-san?"

"I was perfectly asleep. I just woke up when I heard the taptaptap of your footsteps all the way here. You seemed totally hurried, what was up?"

Immediately waking up because she discerned who came from footsteps.

While in wonder about Ena's inhuman hearing ability Yuri quietly said: "U-um, around this shrine there are so many strange buildings..."

"Ah, sorry sorry. Ena was also surprised when she came; it really is full of dirty hotels, isn't it! Tokyo really is amazing~! But it's convenient to have a convenience store so close. And there are no bears."

Apparently for half a year, Ena had gone through training in a sacred ground in the mountains.

Laughter reminiscent of a wild lifestyle made Yuri blush. They were in a quiet residential area. But several hotels of a certain kind were erected around the shrine within.

"But you know, Yuri, don't you come to these places as well?"

"I don't! How do you get to such conclusions?!"

Yuri strongly refuted the idea.

However, Ena curiously inquired with a blank face: "Why?"

"I don't! Godou-san and I are only friends! We have a pure relationship!"

"Ehh~? But your rivals, that Erica and Liliana, are foreigners, right? ... I'm not quite sure, but don't they make progress that way?"

"P-progress?"

After putting away the sleeping bag, the two hime-miko sat down across each other in seiza.

Ena accepted the presented lunchbox, quickly opened the lid and gulped down the contents.

"Yeah, your cooking is great as always. Lately I've only had nuts, wild plants and the like, so this is exceptional~."

Apparently she had abstained from all kinds of grains. Ena's training was harsher than the one for other hime-miko.

Polishing her sword skills, chastising herself again and again, emptying her mind. Lately Yuri couldn't stay quiet without discussing this issue as she worried over the girl's body.

"...That is, does Godou san... no, do men prefer assertive and sensual women after all?"

"Uhm~, Ena doesn't really know either, but isn't it different~?" Ena said while happily tasting the white rice.

She spoke frankly, but when sitting in seiza she looked terrifically beautiful. Her way of eating and mannerisms were good and she sat upright. Actually, in terms of being a young lady, she exceeded Yuri.

"Yesterday, you know, after I finally came back to Tokyo, I went for some sightseeing. To Akihabara."

"Ahh, aren't there many foreigners around there?"

"And then, after looking through most of the electric appliance stores in the main street, I also entered the shops in the buildings and other places... and it was amazing."

"Amazing?"

"Yeah. There were many small stores, all so strange and fascinating. There are lots of shops that are, you know, completely pink, or like skin-colored."

"Completely skin-colored...!?"

"Nirvana or Paradise, maybe be like that. Whether it's to the left or right, in front of you or behind you, there are nude images all over. Hey, you know the Mithuna reliefs^[9] in India or somewhere? Like those, BAM, a wall of pictures of naked men and women!"

"I'm sure very pious people must have gathered there..."

She hadn't known Tokyo had such a sacred place for foreigners.

While embarrassed of her own ignorance she decided that one day she would go there herself and study it.

"Maybe. Anyway, Ena understood that boys probably like these kinds of things," Ena remarked as she gobbled down on the vegetable side dishes.

She was looking somewhere far away. Like there was a very sensational scene going on.

"I think since Kusanagi-san is a boy, he's the same. In the end being naked will work, definitely!"

"You're saying too much! It's a bit doubtful at times, but Godou-san basically is someone diligent!"

"I wonder~. Yuri, you're too fastidious so he just might not be able to say it."

Yuri was taken aback when her fellow hime-miko pointed it out.

On Sardinia, Lucretia Zola had thoroughly lectured her on boys' mentality.

But she could not understand that profound theory in the least. Possibly, the key for a smooth interaction with Godou Kusanagi lay in that.

"By the way, you brought Ena's lunch box, but did you properly make one for Kusanagi-san? Although it doesn't look to me like you have that extra baggage..."

"Ah, yes. It's just your share."

"You can't do that! Don't forget the shortest way to get close with an animal is through feeding!"

"B-But there is no reason to. There is no reason to make a lunch box for that person in the first..."

"Don't worry about that. You need to start acting first! First, need you to approach him more forcefully, like by asking him to embrace you and sneaking over at night."

"Sneak over at night!? Please hold it, how did we end up there!?"

"I think it's easier to win his heart if you do. Hold nothing back!"

"Me, sneak over at night... don't the men usually do that? First of all, it's illegal in the present times!"[\[10\]](#)

"You've got problems~~. Anyway, you need to do at least that much. Ena will help out too, you see? For now, let's develop your relationship with Kusanagi-san all across today. Okay?

Due to the excessively unreasonable proposal, Yuri turned pale.

"I-I can't! That's impossible!"

At Jounan Acadamy, physical education for boys and girls was separate.

Two classes would take lessons together, and the boys and girls were split up. Godou's class five was together with class six.

The sun rays were still relentless and the temperature was high, too. It was late summer, but the weather felt like midsummer. Therefore the pool was used in physical education.

And today as well, the curriculum of swimming was implemented.

But that was only for the girls. The boys had gymnastics in the humid gymnasium

The feverish atmosphere was stuffy to the limit, and in the swirl of heat and body odor, the male students did mat exercises or apparatus gymnastics.

"Gentlemen, don't you think this is wrong?"

Someone asked a forceful question.

The speaker was Nanami. He often made problematic statements like "Actually, I'm a sucker for miko".

But he was also unexpectedly charismatic in leadership. Whenever people did something as a group, he was usually found at the center of it all... as good-for-nothing of a center as he may be.

"'Segregated society'. Let's think about the meaning of these words once more, comrades. Gathered here are nothing but men, in a gray wasteland of a world with neither warmth nor color. Is it fine to submit to this? Most certainly not!"

Nanami was shaking the gymnasium with the heap of nonsense he was loudly proclaiming.

Incidentally, the teacher in charge of physical education was absent. A few minutes earlier, he had left, accompanying a student who had fallen off the balance beam and apparently fractured a bone. Now they were in the middle of self-study.

"So if this world is a wasteland, only those! Only those! Who follow their ambitions will be able to change this place. We have to wrench open the closed doors to paradise ourselves!"

"Nanami... what you want to say is, in short, *that?*"

The one who asked was Takagi. He belonged to the Kendo club and due to his large build he was quite able at it.

But he was a man weak to strange influences and easily led astray.

"At this very moment, we must aim for heaven!"

"Yeah. Currently, the place closest to heaven in this school is the pool. The pool where our girls of classes five and six are taking lessons together! The sacred grounds we are forbidden from entering, the secret flower garden where more than thirty girls are frolicking in the water and where lily flowers bloom^[11]!"

"But the risk is too high..."

A cool voice poured over them like cold water. Sorimachi derisively laughed.

The self-styled "Man with 108 little sisters in 2D". As ridiculous as it may be, it was a weirdness only had who seen something to the end. At least he wasn't an ordinary person.

"We boys from class five and six number a total of thirty six. This many people would act at the same time to appreciate the girls at the pool. Certainly it is a charming idea but we only have forty minutes until classes are over. We won't even be able to make proper preparations in such a short time. Feelings alone won't take us anywhere..."

Nanami stomped towards the speaker.

Bam! Nanami's fist struck home. Sorimachi sternly looked at the assailant who had hit him on the cheek.

"Nanami, you!!"

"I misjudged you, Sorimachi. I never thought you were such a boring man."

The one who struck and the one who was struck were facing each other, one with anger in his eyes, the other with pity.

"Back then, you'd never have used that as an excuse. You boldly faced even the most difficult missions, a hero dedicated to victory. And yet, you've turned into such a pussy!"

"What are you talking about, you asshole!"

"About two months ago. On the day before the release of "Saint ☆ Little Sister Academy", you fought to see all endings of 'Together with Onii-chan', where you have to clear four little sisters, and 'Imohare!', where you

have to marry seven little sisters. All that while suffering from 38° fever and diarrhea..."

"Tsk. You remember some unpleasant things."

Sorimachi looked away from Nanami who was talking about old times.

"Back then I said. 'Stop already. Just shelve it as crap. Your body's at its limits,' I said. But then you replied..."

"Yeah. 'I'm a man with 108 little sisters. I'm no useless brother who will abandon a little sister once he's started capturing her.' On that one day I conquered all the endings, and on the next, I devoted all my power to "Saint ☆ Little Sister Academy"..."

Flames were lit in the two boys' eyes.

Flames inside their hearts that only lit up when two comrades with burning spirits understood each other.

"Looks like I forgot my guts from that time. Thank you for reminding me.... This is my thanks!"

"Guh!"

"Heh. How is it. Did you feel it?"

This time Sorimachi did the striking. But Nanami smiled even as he was sent flying.

'Have you finally awoken, you stupid idiot?' It was a satisfied smile seeming to say that. Just now, between the two of them, their fists had been words.

"That was a nice punch. It held your spirit. You've got a hot fist..."

"Shut it. I'm done hesitating. Let's fight together."

Sorimachi stretched out his hand and took Nanami's. Like that he pulled him up. It was an emotional scene of two men deeply understanding each other after a clash. However, finally getting fed up with it all, Godou said with a sober voice.

"Hey, guys"

The two comedians directed their stares full of enmity at him.

But Godou kept going, not losing to the pressure.

"There's so much I want to say right now, but first of all, can you not peek? You know that's like a crime."

Foop (The sound of heaving a gymnastic mat)

"H-hey, what are you"

Bam (The sound of said mat being dropped on Godou)

WupWupWup (The sound of male students A, B and C jumping onto the mat)

"Guha. H-hey, wait a sec, are you trying to crush me."

Squashed under the bulky, stinking mats, Godou complained.

The weight of the three students weighed down on him, so it was quite painful. He barely managed to stick his head out from under the mat and secure some oxygen.

"Dammit, he's alive. Well, killing him would be bad, too."

"If you like, I can finish him."

"Calm down. If we do it, we must do it carefully from where his legs can't reach."

The three idiots Nanami, Takagi and Sorimachi said some dangerous things.

Godou loudly asked the other boys surrounding them.

"Do you guys resent me or what? Why the heck do you do this to me?"

"You ask why?"

Nanami glanced down with a cold look.

"Let me ask you then. Kusanagi, why can you say things like 'Don't peek'?"

"Hiding at the school pool and peeking is a hair's width away from committing a crime. Most of all, don't you feel bad for the girls? Don't ask me such obvious questions..."

Godou made sound arguments while silently praying for everyone to quickly regain their senses. If they lost their way over a momentary whim, in all likelihood they'd come to regret it in the future. But that question made most of the students in class five and six go even wilder. Some were even crying tears of frustration.

"You damn hypocrite..."

"Damn it all. You're looking down on us because you have no problems getting girls..."

"Anzai-sensei, we want to see girls in swimsuits!"

"Everyone, calm down. Together with everyone's anger and suffering, I will do the talking. I'll teach this harem bastard who thinks it's normal to capture several girls at the same time about our pure hearts!"

Nanami took control of everyone present and looked down on Godou once again.

"Hey, Kusanagi, I like girls in swimsuits. It's no exaggeration to say I love them."

"Well, I won't criticize your personal hobbies."

"Just shut it and listen. I like girls in swimsuits... that's right. In year one, class five and six, Arakawa-san stands out for having a great body, doesn't she? And obviously the appeal of Miyama-san's small build and flat chest strikes home with those enthusiasts. We can expect the swimsuit to bring forth another kind of charm in the bespectacled Sawa-san, too. And Nagasato's plumpness should turn into the characteristic soothing aura that slender girls don't have. But, even so."

Nanami strongly clenched his fist. He probably was about to present his good-for-nothing pet theory.

"Even if those girls are so fascinating, in terms of idol groups, they wouldn't be in the front row. They are the second row, so to speak, reserve members. So, who's the creme de la creme?"

"Hmm... I don't know."

He had an idea of the other's emotions, but Godou dared playing dumb.

"Erica-sama with her supremely gorgeous body. Mariya-san who makes you wonder if she's hiding splendid sizes somewhere. And then there is Liliana-san who became the 'Number One girl I want to put in a leotard' with her fairy body... You asshole who monopolizes those celebrated flowers will never understand what makes our blood boil. No, like you'd be allowed to know!"

"I've got a proposal! Let's lock Kusanagi-san into the equipment room like this!"

"That's a great idea! Alright, someone go find the key!"

"Okay, now it's time to pay the piper, you bastard. Muahahahaa!"

In response to Nanami's fervent speech, boys' voices strangely started to well up here and there.

Thus the union of boys from class five and six had locked Godou Kusanagi into the equipment room and started marching toward the paradise of maidens frolicking in water.

"If you think about it, it might be a good chance. Erica, let us finally find out who is better through swimming."

"A swimming competition? With you? No thanks."

Classes five and six were having lessons together.

By the poolside two girls were having a conversation like that.

Of course they were Liliana Kranjcar and Erica Blandelli. The swimsuits Jounan Academy designated were one-pieces with a daring hole in the back.

The ones wearing it the most splendidly were those girls.

The girls were causing the illusion of the commonplace school pool to be an oversea resort. With their blond and silver hair fluttering in the wind, they were gathering everyone's stares.

"Heheh. Running from a battle is unlike you."

"But in swimming I've never been a match for you. Our reflexes and strength are almost the same, and yet... is it because the water resistance is too different, as I thought?"

"W-what!?"

Liliana in her swimsuit was truly slender.

But being delicate alone should not lead to such results. The Eastern European girl was so slender it seemed she would break if held too strongly. And although she was so slim, she had wonderfully long limbs. Her nape reminded of a swan. Her well-arranged features reminded of a fairy.

Her slenderness, fleetingness, that merged all of that let Liliana shine.

However.

Her artistic beauty might be of an Eastern European fairy.

But in terms physical beauty favorable in swimsuits, in sensual charm, Erica came out on top after all. Skin toned light-brown on Sardinia. The swellings of her breasts looking like large fruits. Her hip, inviting the sighs of onlookers. The perfect curve of her ass.

And the elegance that naturally showed off all of that.

The was nothing like forced appeal. On the other hand, she didn't hide it from inquisitive eyes either.

Shining just by being there.

That was the kind of girl Erica Blandelli was. Seeing her standing there was dazzling even for Yuri.

"Certainly, you have always been better developed than me! But that does not mean I will take you calling me almost flat hands down!"

"Oh my, I only meant that you were lighter than me, Lily?"

Erica smiled impishly.

Enraged, Lily flared up.

One might think of these two as being fairly close, but at least the silver-haired girl denied it. At any rate, Liliana seemed to feel no timidity towards Erica.

It made Yuri envious. That said, Ena had told her before.

[I'm not quite sure, but don't they make progress that way?]

Certainly not only the extravagant Erica, but also the straight-laced Liliana were radiating intense self-assertion and positiveness.

Compared to those girls, she herself was... At this point Yuri was terrorized.

(What was I thinking just now!? It was like I was competing with Erica-san and Liliana-san over Godou! No, that can't be true. Godou and I are just friends. A bit closer than usual, and there are just circumstances we can't really tell people about, and...)

While she thought so, a curious emotion welled up in Yuri's chest.

She felt a pain constricting her chest, a cold uneasiness nesting itself in the pit of her stomach, a sweet and sour hope; all those feelings were mixing inside her.

Haa. She sighed. When she did, someone talked to her from beside her.

"What's up, Mariya-san? Do you feel bad? Should I call the teacher?"

It was the smallest girl in class six, Miyama-san.

She was 145cm tall and baby-faced on top of it. Apparently she was often mistaken for an elementary schooler.

"Ah, no, that's not it."

Taking her eyes off Erica and Liliana in a hurry, Yuri awkwardly smiled.

It truly was a Japanese insincere smile. In return, Miyama-san's expression turned dark.

"Well yeah, even without asking I have my ideas... But, I think it's unfair if even you are bothered by that. You don't understand the troubles of the less fortunate, or rather, your troubles are too luxurious... Anyway, it's too unfair!"

"Mi-Miyama-san? Just what do you want to say?"

Feeling the indignation in the rebuke, Yuri faltered.

At that point class six's class committee member Sawa-san cut in.

"Yuri-san... Miyama-san wants to say 'If they have no bread they can just eat sweets?' Don't fuck with me', you see? 'How dare you complain if you've got such excellent goods yourself'."

Her red-framed glasses were shining.

Sawa-san was slender and grades placing her at the top of her year. Although she was a first year, the drama club entrusted her with a lead role. That girl suddenly latched onto Yuri.

She grabbed Yuuri's chest from above the bath towel she had draped over her swimsuit!

"K-kyaa!?"

"See? What's with these nice boobies? If you cover them your hands, they strangely seem to try to escape. They have the supreme balance being neither too large not too small. With miraculous tightness and softness and a beautiful silhouette... In a sense, these are the best. The first-rate taste that only Japanese beef has. Those tasteless foreign products can't hope to compete! They are wonderful, Mariya-san. Come to the drama club with me and let's aim for the top of the..."

"P-please stop, Sawa-san. T-take your hands off me!"

"You mustn't, Sawa-san, calm down! If you are like that, Mariya-san will!"

A few dozen seconds later. Although panting, for different reasons, Yuri-san and Sawa-san had regained their calm.

Miyama-san was watching the two with worried eyes.

"I-I'm sorry. I saw some nice raw material and just had to invite you..."

"N-no, I am terribly sorry for making you lose your composure..."

"Sawa-san sure turns into a beast sometimes. Ah, Mariya-san, I don't think you need to be jealous of others. If you are bothered, what am I going to do?"

Miyama-san murmured while looking down at her own figure.

Her limbs were childish and put badly, her build belonged to someone in the higher years of elementary school.

Anyway, the one-piece didn't suit her.



A child-use swimsuit would be better. Thinking that much, Yuri was assailed by pangs of conscience.

Just how rude emotions had she held just before. And beside her, Sawa-san tried comforting Miyama-san.

"Hey, Miyama. There are also fellows like Sorimachi from class five who say 'But that's what makes it good!'. Don't give up hope!"

"This isn't funny anymore! Sorimachi of all those strange guys!?"

Yuri suddenly noticed an unrest in her heart.

It was the moment she heard the name of that boy from class five. Didn't that feeling resemble a revelation from her spiritual sight? She looked around.

In the pool. Several girls were swimming towards the other side.

By the poolside. Of course there, too, were nothing but girls. The supervising teacher was a woman, too.

When she was looking around restlessly, Erica and Liliana approached her.

"What's up, Yuri? You seem odd. Did you see something by any chance?"

"Did you pick up a sign of danger? My senses have caught nothing, but you are far more sensitive than I am. If you like I can investigate."

"Ah , no. It didn't feel that important..."

Yuri briefly explained the circumstances.

When she was done, Erica once turned in a circle, checking the surroundings and fixating one point.

"Hey, Lily. If someone tried doing something bad close to this pool, wouldn't careless fellows most likely pick that place?"

At the sides of Jounan Academy's pool facing the school building, pine trees were planted.

That thickly grown line of trees shut out stares from those sides.

But the side without such a blind also had a building. The wooden old school building that would apparently be demolished in a month. It hadn't been in use for almost ten years and been blockaded...

That's where Erica focused her gaze.

"Hmm. You just want to make me investigate it, so don't act so inviting. It's impudent."

Liliana closed her eyes while muttering.

Yuri felt a small amount of magical power leak from her closed eyes and jump towards the old school building.

It should be wizardry to send one of the five senses away. She probably had made her sight take a tour.

"I found them. There are some worthless fellows there."

"Oh my, what bad people... so, how are we going to punish them?"

When Liliana gave her report, Erica maliciously chuckled.

Yuri watched uncomfortably when the two mages, who could be called the top of Europe in their generation, took fighting stances.

"Dammit! Doing whatever they please!"

In the equipment room, Godou Kusanagi finally managed to escape from under the mountain of mats.

The combined armies of boys from class five and six had pushed into the room, dragged all the mats there were over, stacked them on top of him and then tightly locked the room.

"Now all I need is to get out of here.."

Godou glared at the door of the equipment room.

It was locked. There were no tools or skills to break it. That only left breaking through by ramming it with his body.

Destroying school property was bad. If there were other ways he should take them.

Godou reached the reasonable conclusion. But.

The moment he thought of it, a certain image floated up in his head. On Sardinia he had thoroughly seen Erica parading in her swimsuit. He hadn't seen Liliana's swimsuit but it had to suit her very well.

... those ill-breded idiots were scheming to appreciate that view.

For some reason anger built in his chest. And then he reconsidered.

Yeah, emergency situations require emergency measures. In such a situation he didn't have to take the safe route. On the contrary, that would be an excuse for negligence. Therefore Godou decided to force his way through.

It was just when he had finished making space in the equipment room and gotten ready to charge against the door.

"Godou-kun, you alright? Wait a sec, I'll let you out now."

He had heard that voice before. It belonged to Ono, a boy in his class.

Clackclack.

He heard a key being turned and then the door opened and showed a small boy with frizzy hair.

"Sorry, they hid the key so it took some time."

"Not at all, you really helped me. Thanks."

Ono shyly laughed when Godou thanked him.

"As expected not everyone went along with the three idiots. Including me, about a third of us have stayed here."

"Still, the fact remains that two out of three went with them. That's rather more impressive."

Urged by Ono, a shocked Godou left the equipment room. Guided by anger he decided. He would hurry to the pool as quickly as possible and obstruct their plan.

"Godou-kun, are you perhaps thinking of interfering with them?"

"Of course. How could I just let it go like this?"

"I see. Then... I won't say it's for saving you, but could I ask you for one thing?"

Embarrassedly, Ono presented him a tiny digital camera.

Come to think of it, Ono was part of the photography club. Thinking that must've been why he was allowed to bring such a thing to school, Godou inclined his head.

"Uhm, what do you want exactly?"

"Actually, I really like girls with glasses. It's no exaggeration to say I love them. So I was wondering, if you go to the pool, could you use the occasion to take a picture of Sawa-san in her swimsuit? Peeping is bad after all, but if it happens while saving the girls, it's *that*, isn't it?"

"..."

"..."

Godou suddenly turned his back on Ono who was staring at him like a wet puppy.

"Alright, I'll be off. Thanks for getting me out of there!"

"Kusanagi-kun! The camera!"

Leaving the appealing voice behind, Godou dashed off to the pool.

This is a story that Godou heard later.

The boys of class five and six under Nanami's command broke into the old school building which was slated for demolishing. There were about fifteen of them.

The insolent boys broke through the blockaded door and entered the old school building.

Occupying the third floor, they steeled themselves to gaze at the frolicking girls by the waterside without any kind of cover.

However, the pool was quite a distance away.

With their eyesight they could see no details at all.

So they who, in letters, desired to confirm the B W H exactly, devised a plan. Takagi remembered he had opera glasses for watching sports in his bag and rushed to the classroom.

For the ten minutes until his return, all the others could do nothing but wait.

The unclimatized old school building was hot and dusty and stank of the sweat and body odors of the gathered boys.

And finally the desired item reached them, cooped up in that coarse environment. It seemed like the whole place was trembling from the opening gates of heaven.

Then the old school building collapsed with a thunderous roar.

Godou ran for his life and finally got close to the pool.

Where were they? Where were those idiots trying to appreciate the girls? Restlessly looking around the surroundings, he tried coming up with a guess. At that moment, he heard a terrible sound.

Looking in its direction, Godou was shocked.

The wooden old school building was about to collapse with a thunderous roar.

Walls and pillars, the floor, all the building materials were breaking into small pieces, got smashed up and lost their form.

The sight was so spectacular, it seemed as though the strain of time had made them wither in a mere moment. With cracking sounds the old wood crumbled. And then, one could hear screams from the inside.

"WHAT THE HELL!?" or "The floor! The floor!".

"Don't mind me, save the little sisters on my hard drive!" or "I really was a sucker for miko!".

Obviously, under the rubble of the old school buildings the boys of class five and six were buried.

Probably those guys had peeked from there.

But now, they were shocked by the sudden disaster movie they found themselves in and struggled in their pain.

It looked they were all going through some painful experiences. Bruises, scratches, they might even have bone fractures. You could say they got what they deserved, but he couldn't deny himself some pity.

Usually, such a supernatural phenomenon should not happen.

Godou noticed the girls loitering near the old school building right away.

It was the usual three. Erica's scornful expression betrayed happiness over the boys' suffering and Liliana's expressed righteousness was served.

Only Yuri alone was worriedly watching the groaning boys.

All three of them were wearing windbreaker jackets or bath towels over their school-designated swimsuits.

"I knew it was you guys... now, whose plan was this?"

"Mine. I only wanted to use [Annihilation] magic for a bit. Looks like that school building really has gotten old. Usually it shouldn't completely collapse with the amount of magic power I used."

Erica composedly answered Godou who came running.

He had heard that she was good with magic to create or transform stuff, but such a trump card was unexpected.

"I can mostly guess what happened, but didn't you overdo it a little?"

"What should I have done? The spell worked better than expected. ...and isn't it fine? With this punishment has been dealt. The original revenge I had thought of was more complex."

Erica happily showed a devil's smile.

Not of the usual devil toying with humans though. It belonged to a devil of the cruel, coldhearted kind.

"That is correct, Godou Kusanagi. Punishment for sins, purification for impurity. As a knight, I also intended to drop the hammer of justice on that dirty undertaking."

Liliana's expression was stern.

It was the gallant, sublime expression of a knight backed by her ideals.

Erica's and Liliana's expressions were polar opposites but apparently the convictions in their hearts led them in the same direction.

While thinking those two got along somehow or other, Godou looked at Yuri. Unlike the knights, she was the only one who looked like she wanted to say something.

"What is it, Mariya? Something you want to tell me?"

"Ah, no. There's only one little thing which has bothered me..."

Her bashfulness made her incredibly lovely.

With her upper body covered by a bath towel, Yuri was fidgeting, trying to evade Godou's eyes and turning her face away.

"Godou-san, is it possible that you, like those boys, want to see us in s-swimsuits?"

"...eh?"

It was an unexpected question. That Yuri would actually ask him such a thing.

Flustered, Godou averted his eyes from the completely flushed red himemiko's swimsuit.

"N-no. I-I don't especially have such an interest..."

Godou went for the harmless and inoffensive answer.

His words trailed off towards the end, maybe because he knew he was pretending.

But what other choice did he have? Even inadvertently, he was living surrounded by beautiful girls. He was in no place to be thoughtless.

"I-I see. That's right, isn't it. I'm glad I asked you, Godou-san. I was right in believing you stood over such carnal desires!"

Yuri's expression was obviously relieved.

Good. Looks like it hadn't failed. It was just when Godou felt relieved.

"What a stupid thing are you asking, Yuri? Of course he isn't!"

"Although reluctant, I have to agree with Erica. She is absolutely right. Yuri Mariya, our lord is the king among kings famous for his lechery."

The two knights cut in with confident expressions.

"I haven't forgotten the hot night I spent with Godou on Sicily. At that time Godou he, he stared at my stark naked body and then it got really rough. I won't let him say he has no interest in a woman's naked body."

Ignoring the startled Godou Erica kept talking. Meanwhile Liliana's face turned bitter.

"The rumored affair in Zamparini's mansion? If I had been there, I wouldn't have let Erica do as she pleased. Godou Kusanagi, if your male desires ever become too much for you from, please call me. As-as a knight, I shall be of use without fail..."

"W-weren't there intricate circumstances at that time? And Liliana, what the heck are you saying!"

After shouting, Godou looked at Yuri right away. Although he had finally tricked her, after this topic it had all been for naught. As he thought, her facial expression betrayed her shock.

"No... no way. So Godou is like the others after all, just like Ena-san said... I-I'm terribly sorry. I need to sort out my feelings so excuse me please."

Fast-talking, Yuri excused herself and ran off.

Without words to stop her, Godou saw her off dumbfounded.

"Oh, Yuri, running away~. Hey, Amakasu-san, what were they talking about just now?"

"How would I be able to hear? Please don't ask me."

They were in a room on the seventh floor of an apartment building.

They had managed slipping into a room that happened to be open thanks to Touma Amakasu's connections.

From its window they could overlook the school grounds and buildings of the Private Jounan Academy.

"But, Amakasu-san, can't you read lips? Weren't you a ninja?"

"Could you call me something else? That sounds like I'm a fake... can you at least make it spy? Also, I can't read lips, but I can understand the conversation through deduction."

The two of them were sitting next to each other by the window, using binoculars.

They perfectly showed the pool and the ruins of the former school building, Godou and the girls.

Right now, Yuri was running away from Godou.

"Really? You rock~. No less from Kaoru-san's right hand man."

"Come on, as long as you have adequate knowledge and imagination, it's just basic reasoning. It probably went like this. Yuri said something like 'Idiot! I don't like you or anything! I HATE you!', I bet."

"Eh? I don't think Yuri's the type to say that~"

"I just thought it would be interesting and added my own hopes."

Getting tired of passing each other the ball in this fruitless conversation, Ena took her eyes from the binoculars.

"Hmm. Alright, I decided."

"What would that be? Are you returning to the main house?"

"As if. I decided I couldn't leave it to Yuri alone. I should support her from now on. Seems more fun and all."

"Why do I feel like that's a really bad idea..."

Ena broadly grinned while ignoring Amakasu's impoliteness.

Magic had caused the wooden school building to collapse in a moment like it had deteriorated.

From that spell alone she could deduce Erica Blandelli's skill. That was the true worth of today's observations. She was great after all. An enemy worthy to fight.

Ena greatly nodded and reached for her metal partner on the floor.

It should become a satisfying battle for the sword, too. And they would be the ones winning.

Translator's notes & references

1. ↑ **Yushima**: a neighborhood in Bunkyo Ward, Central Tokyo.
2. ↑ **Kurumaebashi Street**: An important street in Tokyo, leading from the Bunkyo Ward to National Highway 14.
3. ↑ **Kantou**: geographical region of Japan that centers around the Tokyo metropolitan area.
4. ↑ **Oinari**: also Inari Ookami, a deity (sometimes depicts as three or five deities) of fertility, rice, agriculture, foxes, and industry; with pure white kitsune foxes serving as messengers, inari often appears in popular Japanese culture (and thus anime) as a fox spirit.
5. ↑ **Yamato Takeru no Mikoto**: a legendary prince of the Yamato Dynasty; his father Emperor Keiko feared his brutal temperament and sent him on numerous campaigns, hoping for his death. But his aunt, a miko of Amaterasu (Japanese sun god), lent him the Sword of Kusanagi (also named Ama no Murakumo, Ena's sword here) to assist him; nevertheless, he died of tragically of an illness after blaspheming one of the local gods.
6. ↑ **Oto Tachibana no Hime**: consort to the prince, who sacrificed herself to pacify the spirits of the sea during Emperor Keiko's campaign to take Kazusa province.
7. ↑ **National Isolation**: since 1630s and prior to 1854 when Commodore Perry forcibly opened Japan's doors, Japan had a foreign policy of 'Sakoku' (Locked Country) where no foreigner may enter and no Japanese may leave, under penalty of death.
8. ↑ **Toranomon**: literally Tiger's Gate, Toranomon is a business district in central Tokyo.
9. ↑ **Mithuna**: Mithuna is the tantric term for the union of lovers[2]. The reliefs it refers to here are probably the ones outside the Lakshman temple in the Khajuraho Group of Monuments[3]
10. ↑ **Sneak over at night... illegal in present times**: Yuri is referring to the Japanese practice of Yobai[4], where young men would silently crawl into a sleeping woman's room and sleep with her if she consented. In many cases, this was done by a guy both the family/girl knows, and sometimes even with the consent of the

girl's parents. There were similar practices in pre-modern Europe often referred as 'climbing the window', usually done by lovers or officially engaged pairs whom could not get married yet due to special circumstances (e.g. guy was still an apprentice).

11.↑ **Where Lily Flowers Bloom:** As you may guess, it's a Yuri reference (the Japanese terminology for *Girl's Love/Shoujo-ai*, not the character), as yuri (百合) literally means lily.

Chapter 3 - Hime-Miko of the Sword

The wind roared while the rain drops splattered furiously.

If it was the earlier half of September, it wouldn't have been surprising for a typhoon to land.

However, this storm was different. For the past few days, there have been no reports of a tropical depression approaching.

"Yes, meeting the king today, because Ena can get along well with anyone, it will go smoothly for sure; yes, of course that side will also progress well."

It was at a corner of the sports ground in the high school section of Jounan Academy.

Wearing her miko outfit, Seishuuin Ena was standing while facing the school building.

Her body was entirely drenched by the rain since she was not using an umbrella.

The phone she was speaking with was also completely wet, but since this cellphone was waterproof, power was not interrupted this time.

"Erica-san doesn't seem like she will be easy to handle, this will be exciting. However, having obstacles will be very annoying, so if that's the case, it would be best to keep it one on one...yes, thank you, your assistance at that time will be appreciated."

The Hime-Miko of the Sword. The partner which gave Ena her title, was stabbed into the ground by Ena.

Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi. The sword whose blade measured 3 feet and 3.5 inches.

The blade was simple in construction without any curves -- just a straight sword. The metallic lustre on the blade was like sunlight radiating from the sun in the sky.

An awe-inspiring longsword said to be the weapon of royalty.

"It will be fine, this is just the place to train. Ena was just puzzling where in the school to begin. But this place is very spacious, and Erica-san comes here every day. Yes, let's go with this."

Finishing her phone call, Ena pressed her right index finger onto the blade of the Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi.

As the skin was sliced open, droplets of blood appeared.

And then Ena pressed that right index finger onto the wall of the school building in front of her.

"The many-fenced place of Izumo / Of the many clouds rising -- To dwell there with my spouse / Do I build a many-fenced palace: Ah, that many-fenced palace!"^[1]

Chanting the ancient lyrics in a low voice.

She wrote upon the school walls the same words that she spoke.

The spell song carrying the blood of the Hime-Miko and the smell of iron rust from the divine blade, the poem written on the wall in fresh blood, all disappeared after being washed away by the rain.

This was fine. This will come in handy later.

This ominous feeling might be discovered by Yuri who had very good instincts, but to prevent that from happening, it would be best to avoid meeting that girl in this school.

In that case, even if she felt the presence of the divine sword within the school, Yuri will not be suspicious.

Ena pondered as she ran along the school walls. After she had completed the same task on seven walls, the rain had stopped, and the violent wind had calmed down.

It was still six in the morning, and no club began their activities that early.

"Good. This is it for the morning. One should get a change of clothes before greeting the king."

Ena murmured to herself as she looked at her drenched body.

This job was extremely suited for Ena. However, she hesitated as she decided whether or not to meet this person right now, a boy she will soon develop an intimate relationship with.

"Seems like it will be very troublesome, grampsy. Let's hope there will be communication at the appropriate opportunity. Always assigning troublesome tasks every time."

Complaining to herself as she slung her partner onto her shoulder, Ena left the school.

Recently, the weather was always stormy.

For the past few days, there were sudden gusts of wind, and rain had become quite frequent.

Godou walked along the wet road, looking up towards the sky. This morning, it seems like the dark clouds has been suddenly swept away by the storm.

The clear blue sky seemed a lot broader than before.

Though the calendar clearly indicated that it was already autumn, but the summer atmosphere was still heavy.

At half past seven in the morning, Godou's usual task was not going to school but to first visit Erica's home and get her out of bed.

Erica's apartment was reached by walking along a main road in the Hongou district.

As Godou followed this main road, he suddenly found an unknown girl standing nearby.

Long beautiful black hair full of shine. An appearance very much along the lines of a yamato nadeshiko. Wearing a uniform from some school.

In a bag slung over her slender shoulders was a bamboo sword.

"Excuse me, are you Kusanagi Godou? A pleasure to meet you for the first time, my name is Seishuuin Ena."

She walked in front of Godou and introduced herself.

What is going on? Though he felt very strange, Godou stopped his footsteps.

"Our meeting must be fate. I am the servant girl who will stay by your side. We of the Seishuuin family, would like to receive your blessing, and set off together along the path of domination. Please accept my loyalty."

"What?"

What were these sudden unusual words?

Godou felt puzzled. The girl, who greeted him in such a strange manner, smiled at him.

"Just kidding. Hey, can we not use honorifics? Yuri uses them all the time, but Ena isn't very good at them. Still, Ena will continue using them unless Kusanagi-san objects."

The image of a prim and proper high class lady instantly dissolved.

Suddenly turning into an amiable girl next door, Godou didn't know how to react. Anyway, let's just respond first.

"I don't really mind. Do you know Mariya well?"

"Yes. We are childhood friends. Since Kusanagi-san knows about them already, Ena is also a Hime-Miko."

An unexpectedly shocking self introduction, of one who called herself Mariya Yuri's companion?

That was certainly what she said, and she did have an outstanding refined air of a high class lady.

"Kusanagi-san may not know, but there are actually a few dozen of these Hime-Miko's like Ena. Anyway, the other related details can be gradually explained."

Ena smiled and said.

Like a cool breeze blowing under the scorching sun, the girl gave off an unbelievably refreshing and cool feeling.

"This morning, I received news that I was recommended and invited."

"Invited?"

"Yes, an invitation from Yuri, something like having tea with you together. Are you free after school today? You will receive the invitation card later."

The sudden suggestion greatly surprised Godou. However, if Yuri will be present then things shouldn't go out of hand.

"Well, I'm ok with it."

"Is that so? Great, then. Let us continue with the details later, farewell."

The last words were chosen like a high class lady, but spoken with an outgoing and friendly tone.

Godou tilted his head as he watched the newly debuted Hime-Miko walk off into the distance. The strangeness of this person made him rooted in thought for a while.

At that point in time, he totally had no idea what was about to come in a few hours. Things that will cause unexpected blushing and heart racing.

Classes has finished... it was finally the end of the school day.

After the swimming pool incident yesterday, Mariya Yuri's mood was rather sombre.

To have thought that Godou would have that kind of interest, no, as a healthy male it would be impossible not to have those kinds of desires. However, how can she address this?

As Yuri thought, she finally understood the reason why she was shocked yesterday.

It was as if she was trying to further the intimacy of their relationship.

Yuri felt troubled by her thoughts and behavior that time, and frantically escaped. After one night, she decided to call Ena to discuss things.

'Just give Godou-san a hug, you're not a woman if you can't even do something like that.'

As expected, she was reprimanded.

"B-but why is it like this?"

'You like that person, right? Then it is the only way. If you continue to tarry, then you will be left behind and distanced by Erica-san and the rest.'

"I-it's fine, after all, Godou-san and I are just ordinary friends."

'Really?'

"Y-yes, really. Thus, to have to do something shamelessly lewd like Erica-san..."

Not long since the beginning of the conversation, Yuri was already stuttering.

For some reason, she could not bring herself to speak decisively.

'I see I see. This must be part of the deep intricacies of the internal tsundere struggle described by Amakasu-san. Well, no matter what, Ena will assist you to get onboard. I have already met him today. -- Yuri, do you have something to do right now?'

"Yes, today's tea ceremony club activities..."

After ending the fruitless discussion, Yuri walked towards the school.

Eating lunch on the roof with Godou and the rest has been a daily activity, but she did not go today. Probably because Yuri did not know what attitude to face Godou.

Welcoming the end of school, Yuri walked towards the tea ceremony club.

This was located in one of the rooms of the Japanese style building constructed in between the high school and the middle school sections.

This building housed the activity areas of cultural organizations such as the tea ceremony club, the flower arrangement club, the Japanese dance research club and others, and was commonly dubbed the "Japanese block."

Today was Wednesday. The tea ceremony club met every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday for activities.

Yuri took off her shoes as she walked into the tea room -- and gasped in surprise.

"Ah, Yuri, it's been a day since we last met. As promised, I came to see you."

Seishuuin Ena was sitting right there.

Sitting next to her was the club president Hanabusa-san, who seemed relieved to see Yuri.

"Mariya-san, you came just at the right time. Someone you know has been waiting for you."

Tea ceremony club president Hanabusa Akari, was a second year high school student.

A senior whose staid and gracious spoken mannerisms as well as benevolent facial expressions always left people with a deep impression.

"She wanted to enter the tea room and struck up a conversation with me."

"After asking students from other clubs for directions, they told Ena to come here. Since Yuri will be here sooner or later, I didn't mind arriving early."

Ena spoke leisurely.

Would the school staff not notice someone running about in the school wearing a different uniform?

Yuri felt worried, but Ena made a smile as if she was playing a prank.

"Don't worry, it seems like I wasn't discovered."

"I see... So if that is the case, is it fine for Ena's own school? It seems like you have not gone for the past few days?"

Yuri asked cautiously as the thought came to her mind.

"Ah, don't worry about it, I never went much in the first place anyway. If attendance will be a problem, my family already promised to handle it with the school, so I've been continuing my training in the mountains."

Ena laughed heartily as she answered.

As expected of the Seishuuin family. Yuri sighed with admiration.

Unlike the Mariya family which was impoverished until the Meiji Restoration, the Seishuuin family was already one of the most prestigious houses during the Warring States Era, and was unimaginably influential in all sorts of areas in society.

"Anyway, are you the one with the most authority in this club?"

Ena abruptly faced Hanabusa-san's dignified face and asked.

"Ah, I guess so, I am the club president for now after all. But why?"

"Just instinct. Ena always knows who is the most powerful person in a group."

Ena gazed at the tea ceremony club president as she bowed deeply and said.

"Esteemed club president, I have a suggestion, no, a request. This tea room, could you lend this room for my use for a little while? Don't worry, it won't take long."

A request accompanied by a cordial smile.

This completely unabashed request, however, gave off an irresistible compelling feeling.

Ena has always been like this, doing things as she pleased. The kind-hearted Hanabusa-san had no choice but to nod under pressure.

What was she planning on doing here? Yuri felt more and more anxious.

At that moment, in the classroom of the First Year Fifth Class --

Kusanagi Godou was at his own seat, anxiously staring at the letter in his hands.

A private letter written on Japanese paper.

On it were the words "Please come to the tea room for a visit after the conclusion of today's lessons." Written using a brush in extremely beautiful calligraphy, it carried the signature of Seishuuin Ena.

Was this an invitation? ...It felt very suspicious. Godou thought of the scene that morning.

At some unknown point in time, the letter somehow mixed itself into Godou's desk.

Godou wondered how she placed it, perhaps magic was used. Such suspicious behavior clearly could not be just because she wanted to talk to him.

However, Yuri did not appear on the rooftop for lunch, probably because she was avoiding him.

It would be bad if this awkwardness continued, and Godou felt that he really needed to have a good talk to clear things up. Though the matter of this letter was unpleasant, at least it would give a good pretext.

Erica had already gone outside with the girls in the class, but there was no need to get her to come along anyway.

Godou was going to visit the tea room alone, until he suddenly thought of another knight.

"Hey, Liliana, I have something to do alone. Why don't you go home first?"

"Something to do? What is it?"

Greeting her neighbor in the class room, Liliana resumed her usual serious expression.

"A little visit to the tea ceremony club."

"The tea ceremony club? You have something with Mariya Yuri or your sister Shizuka?"

"Uh, I was invited by Mariya's miko friend. I don't really know what's going on, however, I'll just be gone for a bit."

As soon as he gave that explanation, Godou realized his error. If he explained it like that, then she will insist on her knight's duty and come along. He should have just made up an innocuous story.

"This smells suspicious. If it is Mariya Yuri's friend, then the likelihood of a normal person is extremely slim. I will accompany you, for I must protect you."

"Ah, yes. Though that sounds a little too exaggerated."

"Not exaggerated at all. Of course I need to pay attention, especially when you are lacking in crisis management awareness. ...You are always one to make others worry."

And so accompanied by the silver-haired knight, Godou headed towards the "Japanese block."

The size of Jounan Academy's campus was quite large, especially the forest near the boundary between the high and middle school sections. It even had little pools, and was like a small garden.

As the location representing the activities of the various clubs in the cultural department, the Japanese building was also located there.

"So this is where the tea ceremony club holds its activities. It is my first time here."

"I don't come here often either. The only time I came here was when the cultural department held its club introduction fair."

The Japanese block was constructed as a long and narrow single-storey building.

Godou and Liliana took off their shoes and placed them into the shoe cabinet before walking inside. Not far along the corridor was the tea room which was roughly twenty square metres in size,^[2] and there were already six occupants inside.

One was Mariya Yuri, and beside her was Seishuuin Ena, the one who wore a uniform Godou had never seen before. The other four girls sat a little distance away from them, and were all members of the tea ceremony club that Godou had never seen before.

-- Uh, with one exception. That was the little sister Shizuka.

"Brother? Why did you come to a place like this?"

It was quite common for cultural organizations like the tea ceremony club to have both middle and high school members in activities together.

It was probably expected for Shizuka to be surprised. However, she was not the only one to be surprised by the sudden intrusion, as Yuri also glanced over with doubt.

"G-Godou-san? Why are you here."

"It's me Ena who called him here. Now that all the guests are present, let's start the tea party. It also seems like an uninvited guest has arrived, but welcome anyway."

Ena, the only person who was not wearing a Jounan uniform suddenly spoke.

Hearing these exchanges, Liliana frowned unhappily. Just as Godou was about to speak, she had already bent down to sit down in front of the two

Hime-Miko's, but surprisingly she had taken the proper traditional Japanese sitting posture of seiza.^[3]

Unlike Erica who never changed her ways in spite of any amount of nagging, Liliana was more disposed to learning local traditions.

"...Please be wary of this woman, for she had been following Erica and I a few days ago."

Liliana whispered softly to Godou sitting beside her.

This unexpected warning made the atmosphere tense, but Ena showed Godou a calming smile.

"Is that Kusanagi-san's younger sister over there? Hmm mmm, what a coincidence. How should I address her?"

"No, there is no need for that, she doesn't need to join us over here."

"No! Please let me join in."

Even faster than Godou's refusal, Shizuka furiously declared.

In a manner inconsistent with the essence of the tea ceremony, she had rapidly approached and plopped herself down right next to Godou, and created a face to face situation opposite Ena and Yuri.

As things began to take an increasingly odd development, Godou opened his mouth to question.

"So this... how should I address you? You're a student from another school, right, so why are you borrowing the tea ceremony club's room?"

"Just use my name directly. I requested to use this place from the club president over there."

Ena glanced towards the club member over in the distance.

That person was a female member who seemed rather kind but timid, and was smiling in a slightly awkward manner.

"If you just wanted to speak with me, some other place will do."

"That would be a waste of this rare opportunity, so let me serve you some tea personally brewed by me."

Ena looked back at the electric thermos and iron kettle behind her.

Not exactly the most tasteful tea implements, but it couldn't be helped in an amateur school club.

"Anyway, what is the nature of the relationship between brother and this person..."

Shizuka interrupted with an unhappy expression. This was rather rude towards someone from another school, especially one who was older than her. Godou sighed at his sister's lack of manners, but it seemed like Ena did not mind.

"Yes, both I and Yuri here have something to discuss with your brother. To sum it up, it is concerning when Ena and Yuri will be marrying into the Kusanagi household."

Crash! Shizuka had fallen forward in a most exaggerated manner.

And not only her, even Godou was so surprised that he sat straight up.

The rest of the tea ceremony club members who had been drinking tea while leaning their ears over to the conversation also stopped all their motions in shock. Only Liliana sat back silently with a matter-of-fact expression.

"E-E-Ena! You and I marrying Godou-san, what are you talking about!"

"Hopeless. You've always been like this from back then."

Ena admonished Yuri who was shouting with her face all red.

"Ah, Kusanagi-san, please don't mind Yuri whose emotions were unstable yesterday. Actually, what Ena has been saying to this child was, the earlier she prepares herself to be taken by Kusanagi-san the better. So she seems to have become a little too self conscious towards you. -- Perhaps you have begun to tire of Yuri?"

"Nothing like that at all! But..."

"Excellent. No matter what, then we will entrust the two of us to you. Yuri will definitely become a great wife, and Ena should also be useful to Kusanagi-san. Yes, though it feels strange for me to say this, but Kusanagi-san is truly someone who reaps what he sows, how admirable."

"Ena! Please watch your words, shame, shameless!"

"Even if it is shameless, this is important so there is no other way around it.
-- Kusanagi-san, please have some tea."

Placing the tea powder into the utensil, she added boiling water and stirred it with the cylindrical bamboo whisk.

After these actions, Ena handed the container towards Godou. This appeared to be thin tea.

The series of motions were performed in a simple flowing manner and did not seem to be adhering to any rigid conservative ritual.

This contrasted with the cautious motions of the rest of the tea ceremony club.

To use an analogy from calligraphy, it would be the difference between the regular script practised by a clumsy novice compared to the free flowing cursive of a true master.

Accepting the tea, Godou brought the cup to his lips.

Though he wasn't clear on the details of the ceremony, but this was not the time to be hung up on them anyway. Shizuka beside him was frowning. Let's not say anything and try it for now -- but wow, the flavor of this tea has been carefully fine tuned and tastes really good.

Ena used the same motions to serve tea to the others. Though foreigners often disliked the taste of powdered tea, Liliana finished her tea in a composed manner. And then she turned her sharp gaze towards the one who served her tea.

Yuri was enjoying her tea in an elegant manner but with a worried expression on her face.

The younger sister Shizuka carried a displeased demeanor whether before or after savoring the tea.

"Anyway, back to the topic of marrying, it should be fine even if we don't officially update the family registry^[4] right? Since marrying two people will commit the crime of bigamy. But then again, it would be troublesome to explain to the children..."

Ena made another shocking statement.

This woman is a troublemaker, perhaps no less than even Erica.

The shocked Godou, the terrified Yuri, the calmly listening Liliana, the sister Shizuka who was glaring severely at her brother, as well as the rest of the girls of the tea ceremony club who looked somewhat awkward...

Godou felt himself stabbed painfully by the gaze of all the girls apart from Liliana and Yuri.

'Brother is the worst!' 'Is this the so-called adult relationships!?'

'Kusanagi-san and her brother, it's really like the rumors...' 'Those rumors, could they all turn out to be true...'

Godou wanted to escape this place. Why is everyone looking at me with such eyes!?

"Yes, it's like this. I have discussed with Yuri. For tasks like making love and having kids, Yuri will come first and Ena will just be backup. Does Kusanagi-san think this is fine? Or perhaps, you like Ena better?"

"Wait wait wait, wait a minute. This conversation seems to have drifted towards a strange direction. This is too weird!"

"Nothing like that. In fact this is the most important point, so the question is -- what type of girl do you prefer, the withdrawn type or the lively type, which do you like better?"

Ignoring his request for a break, Ena continued her questioning in a relaxed manner.

Towards Ena doing as she pleased, Godou planned to resist with the determination of a battle to the death.

"I won't answer you! I have no reason to answer such a question!"

"Fine, let's put that question aside for now. Then let's talk about what kind of special interests you have, such as hidden fetishes? I once read a magazine article which wrote 'problems in sex life will cause break ups in relationships, so even if the man has abnormal fetishes, you must proactively enjoy them☆' Kusanagi-san, do you have such secrets too?"

"Don't change the subject, listen to me properly!"

Resisting this girl seemed to require a properly prepared iron will.

Godou spoke to Ena who had taken out a women's magazine which wasn't very thick.

"No matter how you change the subject, whether Yuri or you will not form that kind of relationship with me. This is the first point that needs to be cleared up."

"You already have three consorts, what are you talking about at this point."

Having spoken, Ena began to count on her fingers.

"From what is known at this point, there is Erica, Yuri over there and Liliana. See, that's already three people... Ah, and another mistress as well."

"All of them are just my ordinary friends. Stop talking like I'm some sort of predator on females!"

The girls of the tea ceremony club were watching Godou as if eyeing a criminal.

Godou ignored those stares, and declared strongly to defend himself.

"Yes, because Yuri is a very shy person, but I am not like her. Don't worry, Ena will work hard to become qualified to be your concubine, so Kusanagi-san you don't have to be shy."

"M-Mariya, is this actually ok with you!? Please help deny this."

Unable to reverse the situation, Godou turned to Yuri who had been silent all along.

"That I am just ordinary friends with Mariya, and not some sort of strange relationship like she said, please."

"Yes, yes. There is nothing between Godou-san and I..."

"Yuri, if you say that one more time, you cannot take that back."

The one who called herself friend spoke quietly, but her attitude was subtly different from the casual demeanor up till now.

"Then just take Ena alone. If Yuri opts out at this point, then it's fine even if I serve Kusanagi-san alone. Our relationship will be very close, and we will most likely marry and have children. And then even if Yuri regrets it I will ignore it."

"Eh? Ena..."

"If you choose to give up, I will not stop you at all. But in return, I won't give you a second chance. Being shy is very cute, but if you cannot be decisive then it's no good. Unforgivable. If you want something, you have to acquire it with your own two hands."

"...With my own hands."

"Correct. You have to create the life you want to live, right? If Yuri has those wishes, then Ena will take on the responsibility to support you. How to proceed? Make a decision now. How about it?"

Failing to respond to her friend's advice, Yuri lapsed into silence.

Watching the profile of that beautiful face in hesitation, Godou felt anxious. It was a long silence, very long. What could she be hesitating about!?

"...Yes, I understand."

At least she gave an answer. Yuri gazed directly at Godou's face, the first time today since yesterday.

Like that, Yuri shyly spoke in broken words.

"I... cannot completely agree with what Ena has said."

"Uh, yes."

Though abashed, however Yuri's eyes and words carried a strong will.

Suppressed by the strength of her spirit, Godou could not help falling silent.

"However, I believe that the future possible situation that she described cannot be denied with complete certainty. Anyway, I have no idea what my relationship with Godou-san will be like in the future, and we have already done things that no ordinary friends should have done in the first place!"

"And, and that is to say...!?"

"Hence, I cannot declare that we are just ordinary friends! P-perhaps it will turn out just as Ena said, but it could also end up being nothing!"

To the unexpected response, Godou went "Eh?" in surprise.

And then Yuri gazed at him with her very sorrowful but very clear pupils.

"Is it possible... not to deny it? Perhaps you and I were just a mistake of the moment..."

"Ah, no, I never felt taken advantaged of, just a little shocked..."

The memories of the 'ritual' performed with Yuri that June resurfaced.

Godou frantically shook his head.

At this time, his sister Shizuka was going 'Brother is such a big idiot, will he finally be won over by Mariya-senpai right now!?' while the tea ceremony club president was noisily exclaiming 'M-mariya-san is so daring~'

And then Yuri immediately escaped from in front of Godou.

Hiding behind Ena's back, shivering in embarrassment.

"Now, may I have a word?"

Godou who was in a state of shock from the unexpected events, suddenly heard a stern voice.

Liliana Kranjcar.

The blue and black knight, was glaring sharply at Ena.

"What are you planning on doing? Why are you disrupting the peaceful life of my master?"

"I am not aiming to disrupt, besides Kusanagi-san has been surrounded by no lack of rowdy events for some time already."

"If you put it that way it is true after all. My apologies, I have misspoken."

Don't reach an understanding in that kind of area. However, before Godou had a chance to interject his despair, the conversation continued.

"However, if you approach Kusanagi Godou with any ulterior motives, do not expect any mercy from me. Remember that."

"Of course not. How could Ena have any ulterior motives, Number Two."

Towards Liliana who was giving off a dangerous presence as sharp as a blade, Ena struck back with a casual tone.

"Number Two?"

"Yes. ...Since you are the second strongest in that group of people. The blonde is Number One and you are Number Two, Liliana-san. I understood after meeting you two last time."

"...Meaning that Erica is above me?"

Liliana narrowed her eyes. A knight would respond to a personal insult with a challenge for a duel. But even though the atmosphere reached such a level of tension, Ena continued her prankster-like smile.

"If it is a one on one duel then you are roughly equal. But based on your influence within the group, it is clear who holds the greater power. That is what Ena thinks."

Godou could not help turning his attention once again towards the Hime-Miko who called herself Yuri's friend.

Though it was conveyed rather untactfully, she did analyze the opposing situation between the red and blue knights perfectly.

"It is not as you think, I must make this correction."

"Sure fine, but for now I am just giving advance notice. After all taking care of Number One was what I planned from the start, Ena has always had the habit of eating the best things first."

Having casually exchanged instigating words with Liliana, Ena turned her sight to behind Godou.

"Ah, Erica-san, there is nothing wrong with Ena's judgment right?"

She was looking straight ahead -- to the entrance of the tea room, where a glamorously eye-catching female student has appeared.

Blonde with a tint of red, and carrying an extremely rare sense of glamor, it was Erica Blandelli of course.

"Since I couldn't find Godou I went searching... But it looks like everyone is having fun here."

Erica elegantly greeted.

Ignoring the panic in the surrounding people, she kept to her usual style.

"A pleasure to meet you for the first time, Erica-san. My name is Seishuuin Ena, and I am Yuri's friend."

"Ah, but it seems like this is not our first meeting."

To Erica's subtle smile, Ena grinned like a prankster.

"Well, this kind of conversation is the first time, let's just leave it at that. Great, today's goal was to meet the child who is Number One, and I was worrying I had missed my chance."

"I hope I have not failed your expectations."

"...Erica, may I be the opponent of this woman?"

Liliana interrupted their conversation.

But Erica thought for a short while then simply denied her request with a quick "no, not accepted."

"I wish to make that woman pay the price for insulting me. Do not hinder a knight's vengeance."

"I don't want to hinder you, but it can't be helped. I plan on having a political discussion with that woman. If you wish, Liliana you can substitute for me, but I know you hate that kind of task, right?"

Erica smiled generously as she spoke.

Shizuka and the rest of the tea ceremony club were frozen with surprise, but who could blame them?

But Godou could sense the meaning behind the words of his companion.

The reason why Erica wanted to interview this strange intruder was probably because she wanted to keep her occupied while they negotiated.

This course of action required great intellect and political acumen.

To be honest, this would have been somewhat difficult for the slightly crude Liliana. If Erica were to enter into a dialogue, would things end peacefully? Godou nodded to the [Diavolo Rosso].

"Then I leave the matter in your care, Erica, don't make things go out of hand."

"Of course, then let Liliana stay by Godou's side?"

Liliana felt unimpressed by the orders and turned her face aside, but did not complain, presumably because she realized the difference in suitability to the task.

"I can't come along?"

"It's not necessary this time. It would be more troublesome to negotiate with that woman in your presence. Why don't you and Yuri stay here to clean up, is that fine, Yuri?"

"Yes, yes. I understand."

Erica answered Godou neatly, and then gave Yuri directions.

This was the kind of situation where Erica could exert her prided social skills.

Ena also stood up and took the bag that was leaning against the wall. This was the same bag slung over her shoulder, and seemed to be one of those long and narrow bags made of cloth used to carry a bamboo sword or something like that.

Smiling at the corner of her lips, it was as if she specifically wanted others to know her happiness, a smile devoid of darkness.

"Have you made your decision? Then let's go outside?"

"I see. It would be troublesome to bother our friends of the tea ceremony club any longer. -- Then everyone, we will first take our leave. Let us carefully enjoy what is to come next."

And then Erica left and walked outside like a noblewoman excusing herself from a party in progress.

With relaxed footsteps, Ena followed behind her.

Godou watched with worry as the Hime-Miko and the Great Knight left.

As they reached the outside of the Japanese block, Erica began to run in the woods.

Following closely behind her was the Hime-Miko named Seishuuin Ena.

The martial arts level of that woman was at no ordinary level. Erica could sense that level of power from the motions of her body.

Footsteps that were virtually silent, and moving about with an extremely stable centre of gravity. Even if you hung a bell on her ankle, this woman could probably walk around without making a sound.

Amakasu Touma. The special operative of the History Compilation Committee.

That man also had similar motions and manner of walking, though to be precise, they are on completely different levels.

"Actually, there is something I would like to apologize to Erica-san first."

Ena suddenly spoke.

"The incident several days ago? To be honest, that kind of present did give me a bit of trouble."

Erica took out the piece of metal from the pocket of her uniform.

It was the manji (卍) shaped blade fragment that attacked her on the road that night.

Erica tossed the fragment at Ena's feet, and the sharp piece of metal swiftly embedded itself into the soft ground.

"Ah, this? No no, that's not what I was referring to. I'm sure a little trinket like that would have been easily handled by Erica-san. Should I bring out something a little stronger?"

Laughing at the metal fragment, Ena's casual smile admitted that she was the culprit of that attack.

A very perfect smile which conveyed the consistency between her outward expression and inner thoughts.

"Given that the level of Japanese manufacturing techniques should be above this, amuse me."

"Oh, is that so? Then let me show you this."

The black-haired Hime-Miko took out from her pocket several pieces of paper.

Long narrow rectangular pieces of paper, covered with many different kanji of various sizes.

Due to the severity of their tattered condition, Erica could hardly make out the words and the only character she barely recognized was the one for 'sword' -- was this some sort of spell?

"Actually I wanted to apologize, because Erica-san wanted political negotiations, right?"

"Is there a problem?"

"Yes, a great problem. To be frank, Ena is not very good at those kinds of conversations."

Ena's curled lips expressed a fearless smile from the depths of her heart.

The five 'sword' spell charms in Ena's hand were waiting to be deployed.

"Come to think of it, neither is Yuri very suited to such negotiations."

"Correct. Those issues are all managed and handled by the Committee, and have nothing to do with the Hime-Miko's."

The five 'sword' charms were surrounded by green flame, and Ena tossed them high into the sky towards the distance.

In an instant the charms were consumed by the fire, but out of the fire emerged pieces of metal -- it was almost as if pulling blades out of their sheaths.

"Thus, let's do something easier to understand! Like this!"

The metal pieces born from the charms, were those manji (卍) shaped blades.

Sword familiars that could fly.

As the five weapons flew towards her, Erica shrugged her shoulders as if facing a tiresome chore.

"If this is the way things turn out, I should have left it to Lily. -- Father and Mother, Baphomet who boasts of victory, grant to me the power of the words of extinction!"

Perhaps she was too disappointed, Erica did not even have the mood to draw her sword.

Though these familiars were far beneath the martial prowess of a knight, using magic to defeat them would be far more efficient.

Erica chanted the spell words and released the magical power. The technique of [Pulverization], was high level magic which could cause inorganic matter to explode, shattering into dust.

Originally, this spell was not very effective against objects protected or animated by magic, but --

"It's not working, looks like simply increasing the quantity won't work after all."

Watching several of her manji blades shattering at the same time, Ena muttered.

Erica skillfully employed her spells. Creation, transformation, destruction, and reinforcement were her areas of specialization. In these areas, it could be said that Erica surpassed everyone at her age. Even Liliana was far outclassed.

To the metal fragments she just shattered, Erica infused temporary life into them.

Causing them to expand, transform, meld together and receiving virtual intelligence, infusing them with mobility.

-- Using the blade remnants as ingredients, a steel wolf was born before Erica. Though it was in the form of a wolf, but due to the meagre raw materials, a few gaps could be seen between the bone and skin in its construction.

Roar!!!

The cries and motions of the steel wolf were like those of a live beast.

As a creation improvised on the spot, it was quite an accomplishment.

Should her beloved sword Cuore di Leone be added to strengthen the construct? With the protection of the magic sword of the lion, strength and ferocity will definitely rise to a completely different level.

"How about it? If you want to manipulate iron, let me show you the proper way right here?"

"Amazing, amazing. That kind of delicate spell is very difficult for Ena. Erica-san's moves sure are full of finesse."

Ena continued to smile.

She did not seem like she was putting up a front, and Erica decided not to underestimate her.

"Did you mention made in Japan just now? Yes, showing foreigners Japanese techniques would be a nice service. Please wait a moment."

Ena took down the bag from her shoulder and opened it. Revealed was the sword in the jet black sheath, where just the length of the blade was already one metre long.

Drawing out the sword, it was a straight blade with no curve.

"Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi. Let me give an introduction. This is the one truly made in Japan, Ena's partner."

The black-haired Hime-Miko stabbed the blade of the sword into the ground.

Just this motion created wind.

Centred on the sword, calm winds gradually swirled to form a vortex.

Blown by that gust of wind, the created wolf shattered into pieces on the ground, as if shyly fleeing away from steel of a higher grade existence.

Driven by her defensive instincts, Erica summoned Cuore di Leone.

But even for the magic sword of the lion, taking on that sword as an opponent will be difficult.

Magic sword, holy sword, spirit sword, cursed blade.

Perhaps surpassing all these, an even more threatening magical item, could it even be something like a divine artifact?

"Hmm... looks like I pulled it out too early eh?"

Ena began to speak to herself and immediately resheathed her sword. Being able to move that massive blade as easily as if it were her own limb, why did she stop if she was so skilled?

As Erica suspiciously puzzled over her behavior, Ena made an awkward smile and replied 'too bad it's over.'

"Yuri's footsteps are approaching. That child with her spirit sense will immediately notice if I draw this thing. Since she will definitely scold me for unsheathing the sword so rashly, I decided to stop right here."

"Footsteps? You can hear them?"

"Ena's ears are very good, and it's not just one person, there's a man following behind... Most likely Kusanagi-san."

Ena cupped her hand to her ear as she spoke. Erica, however, could not hear anything.

Furthermore, to be able to tell someone from their footsteps like a dog, this could be described as superhuman hearing.

It seemed like an unexpectedly troublesome opponent has definitely presented herself.

Erica dispelled Cuore di Leone. It would be imprudent to battle and seek victory against such an enemy without proper preparations.

"Anyway, which god did that sword come from?"

"I already said, it is the Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi, which I borrowed from grampsy. If you really want to know then try investigating it. -- Anyway, see you again in the near future."

Waving her hand affectionately, Ena turned to leave.

As she watched her opponent depart, Erica decided with determination to immediately start gathering intelligence.

It was after Erica and Ena's figures disappeared.

The three people left behind began to gather the used tea implements in the room and take them to the sink for washing.

As Godou and Liliana started preparing the sponge and detergent for washing up, Yuri suddenly showed a worried expression.

"What is it, Mariya?"

"Ah, no. There is just something that is causing me concern. I am sorry, but I must go out for a while."

After Yuri left the sink, Godou suddenly thought of something.

"Excuse me, Liliana, but I leave the rest to you."

"Yes, sure. Kusanagi Godou, where are you going?"

Godou did not answer as he left to chase after Yuri.

Yuri had just exited the Japanese building and was about to walk into the woods. With a surprised expression, she questioned Godou who had suddenly caught up to her.

"Godou-san why have you followed!?"

"Yes, I felt that Mariya was acting a bit strange... Perhaps, you have thought of something about Erica and Seishuuin Ena?"

"Not really, but somehow I just feel something is off in the atmosphere."

The two of them made their steps towards the depths of the forest with Yuri in front and Godou following behind.

"Uh, so what kind of person is that Seishuuin Ena? She mentioned she was one of the Hime-Miko's."

"That is correct. She is the heir to one of the Four Families -- the house of Seishuuin. Ranking first amongst the Hime-Miko's watching over Musashino, she is also my childhood friend."

The Four Families. A term never heard before.

"Seishuuin, Kuhoutsuka, Renjou, Sayanomiya -- these are the four ancient families that have been using their magical powers to serve the emperors over the ages. Amongst them the Seishuuin were distinguished by battle strength and political power, while the Sayanomiya has formed the core think tank of the History Compilation Committee. ...It would take a long time to explain everything, so let us leave the rest to another time."

Yuri answered fluently, but stopped with a forced smile.

Due to the use of a specialized term, it seemed like Godou was getting lost. In consideration of his confusion, she decided to stop.

"I understand better now, so over in Mariya's faction there are all sorts of complications as well."

"Actually this was Amakasu-san's suggestion, that I should not disclose too much information to avoid confusing Godou-san too much."

"That sounds about right, in fact I am still very confused."

The two of them conversed as they ventured into the depths of the forest and came across Erica.

"Are you fine, Erica-san?"

Yuri had located Erica using her spirit vision, and she ran towards Erica with a relieved expression.

However, Ena was nowhere to be found, did she leave first?

"You can't be worrying about me just because of that woman, is she really that dangerous a person? If it came to a fight between the two of us, I, Erica Blandelli would be at a disadvantage -- is that what you predicted, Yuri?"

To the Hime-Miko who approached her, Erica suddenly questioned.

"Ummm, that..."

"Seishuuin Ena's partner, I have taken a great interest in that object. Will you allow me to ask about its details?"

To this question, Yuri lowered her head.

In other words, she couldn't answer even if she wanted to. Erica sighed at such a situation.

"Fine, it's ok even if you cannot answer, I just thought it was worth a shot. Don't be concerned. Same for you Godou, don't question Yuri about that girl. I think there are many things she will find it difficult to answer."

Erica was speaking in a friendly manner as if worrying about a younger sister. Presumably she was being considerate of Yuri's status as a member of the Hime-Miko organization.

It was during such a time that the [Diavolo Rosso] showed a sense of compassion unbecoming of her moniker.

Godou nodded in agreement.

"So, where did Seishuuin go?"

"We chatted for a bit, and then she bid her leave, asking me to look after Yuri, that's all."

"You two did not come into any conflict?"

"Of course not, please don't talk about me like some mad dog. I sure don't have a problem with randomly biting people regardless of the situation."

Godou nodded at Erica's report and decided to go home.

Leaving Yuri to return to the Nanao Shrine, Godou went to the Japanese block to meet Liliana.

The silver-haired knight was naturally quite miffed, and Godou apologetically accompanied her to the school gates.

"Anyway, a lot sure happened today, I hope I can take a casual stroll back home."

As Godou complained to himself, Erica and Liliana exchanged glances and looked at him in a subtle manner as if he had said something wrong.

"Just spit it out if you want to say something. This is making me uncomfortable."

"Then I will go ahead. Kusanagi Godou, it is a shame that what you just hoped will not materialize."

"Haven't you noticed that this incident will be one of your greatest trials?"

Being talked to like that by the blue and red knights, Godou felt his fury rising.

Both of them are talking like I was some kind of idiot -- but as his anger rose, Godou finally realized.

What a fool I am, how could I forget that fellow?

Ten metres outside the school gates.

Against the red glow of the sunset, a petite girl was standing very straight.

She was Kusanagi Shizuka, the one wearing the middle school uniform.

The younger sister who had heard the conversations at the tea room just now.



Due to being backlit by the sunset, her facial expression was not visible. But then again, it was not necessary to see it, after all, there is no doubt that it was a face full of fury.

"Little sister Shizuka, please forgive him no matter what excuses he makes? No matter what, one day Godou will show you the truth. ...By the way, Lily and I will be taking another route today, so we'll let you two siblings get along, no problem --"

A truly diabolical smile.

Godou felt his body weighted down by Erica's softly spoken words as she made such an expression.

Translator's Notes and References

1. ↑ **Izumo**: refer to the legend of the Japanese storm god Susanoo and the slaying of the Yamata no Orochi.
2. ↑ **shubo**: the shubo (坪) is a size unit used for rooms or buildings in Korea, Japan, China and Taiwan equal to 400/121 square metres (3.3058 m²). In this case, the tea room is 6 shubo in size.
3. ↑ **seiza**: (正座, literally "proper sitting") is the Japanese term for the traditional formal way of sitting in Japan, first kneeling on the floor, folding their legs underneath their thighs, while resting their bottom on the heels.
4. ↑ **koseki**: (戸籍) is the Japanese family registry. Japanese law requires all households to report births, acknowledgements of paternity, adoptions, disruptions of adoptions, deaths, marriages and divorces of Japanese citizens to their local authority.

Chapter 4 - Date Proposal

At the History Compilation Committee, the Tokyo Akasaka branch.

After eleven o'clock at night.

Amakasu Touma stayed alone in the office.

However, from the looks of this office, it was apparent that this intelligence agency directly under the state did not have many employees.

Occupying an entire floor of a residential and commercial building, the office was lined by a number of desks.

Piled high on the desks were all sorts of computers and documents, all kinds of books (including manga) as well as an assorted array of snacks and junk food, health equipment such as pressure point massage tools, and toys targeted towards infants and older children.

Without prior knowledge, one would likely have mistaken this office for someone working in the gaming, anime or publishing industries.

In such a space, at a certain reserved desk, Amakasu Touma was facing a laptop computer. Not hard at work, but browsing his favorite websites as well as reading anonymous message boards. However, he was not completely loafing on the job.

His ears and mouth were busy on the cellphone, communicating with his boss about work related affairs.

"That matter has already been handled, don't worry, please have greater confidence in me."

'I also wish I could do that.'

Sayanomiya Kaoru's wonderful voice flowed from the cellphone.

If teenage girls heard such a voice, they would likely cause a commotion with cries of 'iyaaah, that voice is super cool!'

'To be asked to have more confidence in someone who likes to visit, during working hours, blogs and celebrity news sites about idols and drama actors...'

"That is serious intelligence gathering, it is very important to our work."

As Amakasu shamelessly searched for excuses, he continued to stare at the online auction page in front of him.

'Other than that, have you discerned the intentions of the Old One?'

"No, not yet, but up until recently he had not taken any interest in Kusanagi-san."

At the Tokyo branch of the History Compilation Committee, Amakasu was the only one there who knew how to cater to Sayanomiya Kaoru's preferences and became her trusted subordinate.

"Speaking of recent events, there is the incident at Naples? The battle against Perseus."

'Ah yes, Amakasu-san called him the Hero of Steel, right?'

"Yes, Perseus is the representative hero with the [Sword] characteristic. Verethragna who Kusanagi Godou unwittingly defeated also belongs to the same category."

'As the ancestor of Verethragna, the "born from stone" legend is also attributed to Mithra.'

"There is also the Armenian war god Vahagn who has been called the brother of Verethragna. The hero god possessing flaming hair and beard, and born from the crimson sea."

Stones, in other words, ore, the origin of iron. Fire, to melt ore. Wind, to start fires and fan the flames. Water, to cool the newly forged metal. The intricate relationships between the elements are all essential to the various sword gods.

'Just like King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table?'

"Exactly. Using the legend of Excalibur as a starting point, there are numerous myths whose essence originates from the tale of the god of steel. To say that the 'Knights of the Round Table originate from Celtic myths' would be over simplifying things."

'This is certainly quite a deep topic.'

"Of course, one must not ignore the elements of Celtic myths either, but in order to interpret those legends, the history of the multicultural nation

formed by Britain and the Roman Empire must be considered. This should have been explained by Kaoru-san from the start."

The young cross-dressing great-granddaughter of natural historian and founder of the History Compilation Committee, Sayanomiya Koremichi, deliberately forced a laugh at Amakasu.

'Hahaha, sorry sorry. I've been busy with this and that, what with things like school and Hime-Miko's etc, and don't have much time for studies any more.'

Currently, the top priority would be to scrutinize the movements of Seishuuin Ena, the vanguard of the elders.

Having reached such a conclusion, the conversation ended.

Amakasu decided to head straight home, so he locked the door and exited the building.

Planning to have a meal, he walked over to a certain ramen shop in the Tameike-Sannou neighborhood and stopped in front of it.

Not only within the shop, but tables were also placed outside for customers.

As soon as he took a seat on one of the outside tables, a server came to take his order.

Without particular pondering, he ordered a soy sauce ramen with a hard-boiled egg and a can of beer.

At the same time, a beautiful woman approached him. No, calling her a woman would be excessive, it would be more accurate to describe her as a beautiful girl.

Seeing the girl's face, Amakasu shrugged his shoulders. After all, there would be no point in trying to escape as he would be found again, so he might as well just say hello as usual.

"It's been a while, Erica-san, and you are still so beautiful. Seeing you makes me so happy."

"It hasn't been that long, Amakasu-san, you don't mind if I sit here, right?"

Obviously he had no right to refuse, so Amakasu nodded his head in an exaggerated manner.

Erica took the seat opposite Amakasu.

The twenty-something-year-old unassuming youth, special operative of the History Compilation Committee.

Having exhausted the resources of the magic association Copper Black Cross, the social network established here in Tokyo, as well as her own wits, Erica's final decision was to make contact with this man in order to maximize her intelligence gathering.

"What a surprise for Erica-san to visit a shop like this."

Amakasu spoke casually, as if he was unfazed by her sudden arrival.

Erica smiled as she carried on the conversation.

"Ah, I've always been visiting roadside stalls back when I was in Hong Kong."

"Yes, now that it's mentioned, you did stay there for a year or so."

"As expected of Amakasu-san, you have investigated already, just like a Japanese ninja superman."

To this rare compliment, Amakasu responded with a subtle expression that was hard to describe.

"Recently I've already begged someone else not to address me that way. At least call me a secret agent or a spy... Besides, if you use such a description, 'superman' is kind of redundant."

"Is that so? No matter, I will respect your personal opinion."

"Much appreciated."

At this time the server came with the menu, and Erica spoke without hesitation.

"Do you have wonton noodles? And of course, shrimp wonton would be best."

"Ordinary ramen shops in Japan won't have that menu item, please go to a Chinese restaurant if you want something like that... Uh, this lady here would like to order the same things as me."

Accepting Amakasu's order, the server left, and Erica made a frown.

"To call themselves a noodle specialty shop, and yet they don't have wonton noodles."

"Of course not. You know, Erica-san. there are differences between ramen shops in Japan and noodle shops in Hong Kong. You've already been here for three months."

Due to the expression of surprise on Amakasu's face as he spoke, Erica felt her anger rising. Somehow, it reminded her of Godou's expression when he points out their 'difference in upbringing.'

"How could I tell? This is my first time in this kind of shop."

"Appearing to be wise and experienced, but actually a sheltered young lady from a high class family, you're the opposite of Ena-san."

Taking a swig of beer, Amakasu commented nonchalantly.

Erica smiled. This man who she called a ninja, does seem to have great observation skills.

"Seishuuin Ena, that girl is not a high class young lady?"

"She is a young lady who received a perfect education since birth. The ultimate yamato nadeshiko. But in spite of that, the child was raised in a natural environment. However, Erica-san probably didn't come to ask about that, right?"

"Yes, what I want to know is about her as a Hime-Miko."

"You sought me out to ask about that? But there is no way I will answer that."

"Is that so? 'The enemy of my enemy is my friend', that probably best describes our relationship right now."

At that moment, the food arrived.

Two large bowls filled with noodles. From the taste and color of the soup, it was clearly typical soy sauce ramen. As well as a can of beer, which Erica opened by pulling the ring off without any delay.

"In Japan, minors are forbidden from drinking alcohol."

"Yes, but isn't this because you ordered the same thing for me? Besides, I am of drinking age in Italy, so don't worry."

"What happened to 'when in Rome, do as the Romans do'? Whatever, so the enemy of my enemy is my friend?"

Amakasu took the white spoon and took a small sip of the ramen soup.

Erica also tried a mouthful, which turned out to be an unexpectedly complicated taste, but it wasn't bad at all.

"I've heard that recently, you've been broadening your circles. If that's the case, then you should be able to obtain satisfactory information from those who keep their distance from the Committee... Especially the state of affairs in Japan, you should have a decent grasp, right?"

"It was rather troublesome, and other than the History Compilation Committee, I never knew about the Four Families who served the emperor and their power struggles in the wizardry world."

A power struggle that was dominated by family clans rather than magic associations.

This was common in the world of magic, and was not really something surprising. However, it did come as a surprise to find out that the winning family were the ones running the History Compilation Committee.

"Your side is responsible too, for you guys simply didn't care for inside knowledge about Japan."

"About a hundred and fifty years ago, the clan possessing the History Compilation Committee was the victor in the political struggle, but it was not that complete or overwhelming a victory."

As the foremost amongst the four, its influence did not surpass the second family by a wide margin.

"Yes yes, it is correct that the Seishuuin family has been a troublesome existence to us, but anyway, since our side has the final say, it isn't that serious a problem."

"That's what you say, but then why are you letting Seishuuin Ena do as she pleased right now?"

"Well we do have our own troubles, not everything can go as smoothly as one wishes."

Amakasu conversed as he ate his soy sauce ramen.

When faced with food that doesn't match her tastes, Erica had the ability to completely ignore the flavor.

Fortunately, she did not need to exercise such an ability this time. The taste was equally satisfactory compared to that of shrimp wonton noodles.

Having finished two thirds of his noodles, Amakasu spoke slowly.

"Let me provide a few tips then. But do not misinterpret this as such a dangerous relationship as between enemies of the same enemy, but that I simply leaked information when entranced by the beautiful young lady sharing a meal with me."

"Hoho, I am honored."

Malevolent smiles appeared on both Amakasu and Erica's faces. Perhaps these two people could be described as a fox and a tanuki dealing in secret transactions.

"Seishuuin Ena is the secret weapon of the elder known as the Old One. No matter what opinions this old man and his companions hold, we Committee members cannot ignore them."

"Just like the relationship between the government and the Senate."

"An apt description. Furthermore, the Old One has bestowed the divine sword to Ena-san."

"Divine sword—could that be the Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi?"

"Also widely known as the Kusanagi sword."

"Ah, that's the same name as Godou."

"Just an ordinary coincidence. The family name Kusanagi is quite common in the areas of Akita and Sanuki, so I believe his ancestors most likely originated from there."

So that's how it was. Erica nodded her head.

If he had inherited the blood of those in the ways of magic, then it would be even better if he had more disposition in magic.

"That sword, could it be the real thing?"

That name, belonged to the favorite sword of Japan's famous heroic god.

To name a fake after a legendary divine artifact was actually quite common. But Erica found it strange for herself to be suspecting Ena's sword as the authentic original.

However, a sacred presence could be felt from the divine blade.

As expected, Amakasu showed a troubled expression.

"Well that depends on the definition of what it means to be the real thing. As one of the Three Sacred Treasures, the sword inherited by someone of the noblest heritage is most likely a fake from an archaeological standpoint. However, that one, on the other hand..."

"That one?"

"Could be described as a treasure just like the real thing. To say any more would be disclosing trade secrets."

"Understood. I'll simply think of it as the unlimited potential of 'made in Japan.'"

It seemed like the Hime-Miko's and the History Compilation Committee still had many troublesome mysteries, and Erica decided she must be even more careful from now on.

Like the Gorgoneion and Prometheus' Grimoire. If what Amakasu said was correct, the Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi would likely harbor the same hidden potential as those kinds of divine artifacts.

However, those objects were originally tools that the gods made for themselves.

They were not meant to be used by humans, and forcing it will result in death. If Kusanagi Godou had not become a Campione, he would have died already.

"I am becoming more and more interested in Ena-san's secrets. By the way, may I ask something a little more detailed?"

Amakasu shrugged silently as if he had no intention of answering. With no other recourse, Erica could only change the subject.

"Anyway, are you and Ena-san from the same school of martial arts?"

"In terms of ability, of course she is stronger. Fighting is not my strong suit."

"Compared to martial prowess, I've heard that Amakasu-san is even more talented in spells... Is that true?"

From early on, Erica had taken an interest in this man's hidden capabilities.

"You overestimate me. After all I just run errands, and there's no need for amazing powers, it's that simple."

To Amakasu's excuses, Erica politely nodded.

Tonight's investigation has reached its conclusion. The next step will be to continue investigating based on the clues provided by this young man who truly cannot be underestimated.

Placing cash on the table and getting up, Erica gave a noblewoman's smile.

"What a pleasant conversation, let us meet again if the opportunity arises."

"Personally, I don't really want to meet you privately like this. By the way, that Ena-san seemed like she was preparing some kind of trap or enchantment at your school. Though I have no idea what type it is, but seeing as it is set by the Hime-Miko who holds the divine sword—you cannot be reckless, please take care."

Signalling with his eyes, Amakasu gave Erica a crucial piece of news at the very end.

It was after school at Jounan Academy, in the tea room of the tea ceremony club—

"To be able to drink tea casually is so great, if it was on the mountains, just boiling water alone would be quite a chore."

"Hooo..." Ena murmured to herself as she deeply exhaled.

In her hand was the cup of powdered tea she prepared herself, and beside her was the tea ceremony club president Hanabusa-san as well as Mariya Yuri.

"However, as someone not belonging to this club, for Ena-san to come and go from the tea room so openly is a bit..."

Ena possessed nimble agility surpassing cats and monkeys.

In Yuri's mind appeared images of Ena using such skills to trespass and infiltrate the school.

"Calling me an outsider is too much, Ena has already greeted all the club members from the president all the way down. Besides, I even brought souvenir gifts today, so at least treat me like a guest."

"G-gifts?"

The greatly surprised Yuri turned her gaze towards Hanabusa-san.

Embarrassed, the kind-hearted tea ceremony club president proceeded to confess.

"Yes, yes that's right—I just received from Seishuuin Ena-san all sorts of things. There's tea powder, some snacks, and then there's the teaware!"

"Could it be, that all the things were brought here from the Seishuuin home..."

Yuri began to take a closer look at the tea-ware in use.

None of them had been seen before. Actually it was rather concerning. Such high class equipment was not really appropriate for club activities.

"By the way, you all don't need to be too concerned. These are just stuff that the granny at my home gathered that weren't in use. Tools are meant to be used."

"True, but high class utensils should be used somewhere more appropriate."

"M-Mariya-san, c-could all these be very precious items?"

"Yes, though actually they are not that priceless? After all, things of this quality can be bought as long as you have the money. The most expensive piece likely does not exceed one or two million... President-san, get a hold of yourself!?"

At that unlucky moment, Hanabusa-san was holding one of the tea utensils with one hand only. Yuri and Ena looked after her as she entered a state of panic.

Afterwards, Hanabusa-san declared she needed to clear her mind, and left the room.

The spacious tea room was left with only two Hime-Miko's as its occupants.

Today was Friday, and because it wasn't a club activity day, there were no other members present.

The reason why Yuri came was because Ena's phone-call summoned her. As for Hanabusa-san, it was her daily routine to clean and dust the place as club president.

"So, why has Ena come to our school again?"

Yuri could not help interrogating Ena.

"Last time because of you, that kind of situation was caused for me and Godou-san—"

"But thanks to last time, Yuri and the king's relationship has progressed slightly, isn't that good?"

"No, not good!"

However it was true that the farce last time dispelled all awkwardness between her and Godou.

But Yuri would not be happy because of that, and furthermore she began to worry again about what happened between Erica and Ena.

"Did you really not have any conflict with Erica-san?"

"No no, we just chatted a bit that time, and then I left immediately."

"Then why did I feel the Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi stir that time?"

"I only drew it out for her to have a look, it's that simple, Yuri you worry too much."

Yuri's sharp gaze focused on the relaxed Ena.

"Though Erica-san sometimes brings trouble to others, but she is a girl who gives her all for Godou-san... for the [King]. If you recklessly target her, you will incur the king's wrath. Please do not forget this warning, I sincerely beg you."

"I know I know, I'll do as you say."

Did she really understand? Or is she just playing along?

Unable to discern Ena's true intentions, Yuri could not help breathing a sigh.

This type of threatening warning, should really be the job of the History Compilation Committee, but somehow they seem to be giving off a sluggish feeling in this matter.

"Yuri seems to be worrying about something strange, but you have more important things to handle, right?"

"Important things?"

Due to Ena's sudden question, Yuri lost composure.

"The matter of developing relations with Kusanagi-san. Now that it is declared that we will both marry into his household, the next step is... Of course, a date, right?"

"Date!? Are you suggesting that I-I-I and Godou-san have a secret rendezvous?"

"Yes, exactly, or maybe you can call it a tryst?"

"No way! Two people cannot do that unless they are married!"

"Actually this kind of thing is very common before marriage. Don't worry, come with Ena together to invite him. To have Yuri on the right, and Ena on the left. Kusanagi-san will definitely be happy to be hugging two beauties simultaneously, one on each side."

Ena showed that innocent smile and stood up, and then forcefully pulled Yuri's hands.

And then the two Hime-Miko's began searching for Kusanagi Godou within the school.

Meanwhile, Kusanagi Godou was—

"And thus, let us commence the second meeting of the Judgment Council Censuring the Bastard Kusanagi Godou who Monopolizes the Two Great Beauties + Newcomer. Everyone, are you all ready?"

"No problem. Let us bring to justice Kusanagi Godou, public enemy of men."

"Of course, on account of our ideals of equality in love communism, let us give our utmost in denouncing the capitalist class!"

Due to these three raving mad men, Godou was currently a prisoner.

After school, he was covered by a sack and kidnapped.

Next, he was taken to some unknown empty classroom, and thrown onto the ground with his hands and feet bound by transparent tape wound numerous times. The three perpetrators had paper bags concealing their faces, but Godou, who knew their identities from the start, simply spoke coldly.

"Nanami, Sorimachi, Takagi... Though I already knew you were all idiots, I never thought your stupidity could reach such heights. Please let me go while your crimes are still minor."

Hearing Godou speak, the three idiots stared at him through the eye holes in their paper bags.

"Fool, we are not of those names."

"That's right, we are not your classmates."

"We are the allies of justice who devote our thoughts to the people and the country, please do not have any odd misunderstandings, ok?"

Godou had no doubt, if ultimate idiots existed in this world, surely it must be these three in front of him.

"Uh... Though I don't really understand, but you guys must have many reasons, and I probably have areas I could improve, so just let out all your complaints and I will definitely listen to them."

If possible, he wanted to be released as soon as possible.

Thinking thus, Godou offered a peaceful proposal, but the three idiots angrily scoffed and their arrogant and hateful attitudes continued unchanged.

"You bastard, your mouth only speaks pretty words... Fine, then why don't you come clean with your crimes this past summer?"

Summer? Hearing Sorimachi's question, the agitated Godou feigned composure.

If it was revealed they were living together on Sardinia, there would be a serious misunderstanding. This required a prudent answer.

"During summer I was living an honest and simple life, and nothing odd happened at all."

To this unconvincing explanation, Nanami muttered "Oh?"

"Then Comrade S, please report your findings."

"At the shopping street in Nezu Sanchoume where Kusanagi Godou lives, this fellow was not spotted in the first half of summer from early July to early August."

"Very good, suspicious point number one. Comrade T, what do you have to report?"

"In the exact same time-frame, there was an interruption of eyewitness accounts of Erica who used to appear frequently in the Hongou area. Furthermore, even Mariya-san disappeared from her tea ceremony club activities during the same period. It is my personal opinion that Kusanagi Godou is the prime suspect based on these times."

"As for suspicious points two and three..."

Nanami spoke in an exaggerated tone, and watched Godou's expression at the same time.

"I say, Kusanagi, could it be possible that during the entire summer, you and Erica-san and Yuri-san were happily vacationing away together? Haha... isn't that a state of paradise like in a galgame?"

"How could something like that happen! No matter how stupid you are, please think before you speak!"

Deliberately investigating my summer activities, how free are these guys really? Godou marveled as he denied. In such a situation, lying was a temporarily solution. However...

"Comrade S, is there any response on the lie detector?"

"He just made a great big lie. My lie detector of the heart is beeping. To Kusanagi this fellow, divine justice must be served!"

"That's right, evildoers must be executed! Let us cast righteous judgment on this lustful maniac!"

Hearing the conclusions of the three idiots, Godou frantically yelled.

"Wait! What is this lie detector of the heart! That's just you guys guessing blindly!"

"You betray your ignorance. This is something that can only be used by males who have long been deprived of the love of innocent girls, you can call it a kind of magic. A dirty fellow like you, will never reach such a level of enlightenment."

Unexpectedly, Sorimachi gave a puzzling answer.

Just as the surprised Godou was about to speak to defend himself...

"The crimes of you fellows stop here, for you have gone too far."

At that moment, the door to the classroom flew open, and the awe-inspiring voice of a girl was heard.

Liliana Kranjcar, the silver-haired knight who hailed from eastern European ancestry, had arrived.

"Kusanagi Godou, rest assured, I will take care of them immediately."

"Sorry, Liliana, I owe you one."

The reliable knight has appeared, and Godou expressed his gratitude.

This made Liliana turn her face aside shyly.

"This is part of my mission, thanks are not necessary. Since I could not find you, I went searching just in case... If you have learnt your lesson, then do not leave my side as much as possible. I would be grateful if you try not to increase my workload."

Godou forced a smile as he nodded, while the three idiots were clearly shaken.

"You seem quite confident, but what difference will one more person make? We have three people here, the power of the crowd, hahahahahahahahaha!"

"Trash like you, I can easily handle three hundred. What a joke."

Liliana retorted condescendingly to their cheap villainous threats.

Hearing her merciless answer, the three idiots clearly began to panic.

Though they had no idea of her true capabilities, they were already overcome by the spirit of the blue knight.

"Wait, wait wait! Liliana-san. We are just trying to impeach Kusanagi Godou for his committed crimes."

"Foolish! Kusanagi Godou is the one with righteous goals who walks the king's path. Rather than let you idiots impeach him, let me show you what is shame."

Takagi's explanation failed to placate Liliana, so Sorimachi posed a question.

"I-I object! You say that Kusanagi has a righteous heart, that idea is very problematic! This man is an evildoer who deceives and plays around with multiple women. Isn't he a sexual predator and public enemy of women!?"

"Do you three just plan on using such superficial slander to change my opinion? What pitiful fools..."

Seeing Liliana's slightly dissatisfied expression, Godou somehow had a bad feeling that Liliana was going to give a highly unusual rebuttal.

"Yes it is true that he is an unparalleled lecher. He will play around with girls on impulse, and is the harem king who has tainted innumerable women. That is the undeniable truth."

That is so not the truth! You've got it all wrong from the start.

Without any hesitation in exposing Godou's faults, Liliana continued sorrowfully in a low voice.

"I have already advised him, he should practice some restraint in playing around with girls. I swore to maintain our relationship for eternity and forever serve him by his side. I wanted to become a woman who offers everything she has to him willingly, and become his partner. However, his rampant fetishes are a part of him, and I have no choice but to accept them."

Liliana turned her face a little awkwardly.

Uh, if it was truly someone so despicable, then just abandon him quickly. Godou could not help thinking that.

"Though one day he may burn himself through his womanizing... But no matter when, I will always be his support, and I swore I will definitely save him. As long as this sentiment persists, my heart will not be swayed by despicable slander."

Liliana's forceful words were powerful, and overflowed with sincere touching emotion.

However, the content sounded like something said by a female victim of some deception or marriage con.

The three idiots had the same impression, and loudly protested.

"Deceived women always insist on something like 'he did me no harm'!"

"Hurry and awaken! Liliana-san!"

"There are still many men in this world much better than him..."

"I hope you all do not misunderstand. Kusanagi Godou and I do not have that kind of superficial male female relationship. I am only his knight, and the companion who promised to stay by his side forever. We have sworn that we will face all trials and tribulations together no matter where or when, that is the relationship that we have."

Without being aware, Liliana had drifted into a dreamlike state almost as if talking to herself.

"The way he plays around with women, though it will be tough for me... However, it will strengthen the bonds between the two of us, as long as I become the most special existence in his heart, and no matter what kind of woman he seeks, he will always return to my embrace in the end..."

The man she is talking about must be one of those emperors or sultans, whatever you call them, that dominated the Islamic world a couple of centuries ago. Definitely cannot be referring to Kusanagi Godou. As Godou tried to escape reality, the three idiots stared at him and began to cry.

"Beast! Making a harem and getting approved! Heavens! How could you allow something so unfair!"

"Is this conditioning? Is this the result of the forbidden act of sexual conditioning a minor below the age of eighteen!?"

"I am crying...? These are tears? Damn it, this is so despairing!"

The three have been completely defeated, and at this time, the classroom door opened again.

"Ah, found it, Kusanagi-san turned out to be here."

"E-excuse us for intruding."

Two new ladies have appeared, and they are the Seishuuin Ena and Mariya Yuri combo.

"Uh, excuse me, we're in the middle of something. If you have something to tell me could it wait?"

"Just a few simple words, it'll be over in an instant. I came here to invite Kusanagi-san to our date tomorrow. That is, Kusanagi-san, Yuri as well as me Ena, the three of us together on a date."

"Date!?"

The shocked Godou turned his gaze to Yuri who has turned bright red from the neck.

"Ena-san! To have a date with Godou-san... I have not prepared myself for that yet!"

"If you haven't prepared yet, then prepare now. It's not easy for us to become Kusanagi Godou's 'women', so you need to take more initiative."

Hearing these exchanges, Sorimachi's shoulders trembled continuously.

"M-my ears must be having problems. How could I be hearing these alien words? Hahahaha, who could have thought that I, Sorimachi, would be so

out of date, to be ignorant of the strategy of the simultaneous pursuit route..."

After his accomplice's exclamation, it came to Nanami's turn to babble emptily.

"I-I must stay awake. That girl must be a fairy or a hallucination. It must be my imagination. Think about it, how could fiancees or beautiful girls volunteering to be a lover appear in a simple male high school. That only happens in fairy tales, we must have been caught up in some sort of massive dream..."

The two of them were hard at work denying reality.

Could this be all my fault? As Godou began to get the feeling he wanted to apologize...

"Oh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh!"

Takagi suddenly roared.

His massive 185cm tall body began to shake all over.

"I absolutely do not accept this! This woeful world, this unreasonable result, I absolutely cannot accept!"

As he roared, he took the bound Godou onto his shoulder.

"Kusanagi, I will end our lives together right now!"

"Wait, wait a minute, why does it have to end like this?"

"Your existence has disrupted natural order. You are the destroyer of the world—an unacceptable existence! Let us start our eternal slumber together!"

Inexplicably making a sacrificial decision, Takagi began to charge madly with Godou on his shoulder.

Leaving the classroom and passing through the corridors, he finally ran up the stairs.

Though he has trained his muscular body in the kendo club, but this mad charge was clearly out of the ordinary.

"Calm down, Takagi! Why are you so impulsive!?"

"Can't you even understand! All the sad men on this planet—those who have never tasted love, and ostracized by all women outside of the 2D world, they have lent their power to me!"

Takagi carried Godou and ran up the stairs in one breath.

Liliana could only watch in shock at the speed and imposing manner of the escaping Takagi, whose male figure has surpassed the boundaries of ordinary humans, and was now challenging the limits of the human race.

And then on the roof—

The berserk Takagi has carried Godou to the highest point in the school.

"This place should be high enough..."

Takagi was muttering to himself as he reached the fencing that prevented accidents on the edge of the roof.

The unsettled Godou frantically looked down to see the sports ground not far below.

"High enough? What high enough!?"

"Of course it means to jump down from this height, is it high enough to kill me and Kusanagi."

"If you commit suicide, your family will be sad! Let's settle this peacefully right now, ok!?"

"Ho... My sister is not like your Shizuka. Every day all she says is stuff like 'brother is so unfashionable, go and die!' There is nothing left that binds me to this world."

At that moment, someone had secretly crept behind Takagi and Godou, and applied a series of karate chops. Mmm... Takagi was painfully laid low on the ground.

"What!?"

"Godou, are you ok? I finally caught up."

The one who knocked out Takagi, and then in mid air caught Godou who was about to fall onto the concrete floor, was Erica Blandelli.

"I saw you were kidnapped and came to save you... But I hope I wasn't interfering unnecessarily?"

"No, not at all. I'm saved. Really, thank you very much."

As he expressed his gratitude, the blonde girl set him down gently and ripped apart the tape binding his hands and feet.

"Godou, I hope you will express your thanks with action."

"If it is something in my power, I will try my best effort... But what do you want me to do?"

To this unhesitating answer that clearly lacked forethought, Erica could not help but laugh bitterly.

"Though I find your honest but reckless principles very cute, but it is very careless. It would be better if you carefully consider situations and be flexible with your judgment."

Godou felt slightly troubled at Erica's passionate warning.

Was it too careless to agree to do anything for her when caught in the mood of having been saved by her?

Erica smiled gently at Godou, but if you raised the hidden malevolence in that smile by 30%, then it would become the 'devil's smile' that gloats from having played a prank on others.

Just as Godou gazed at his beautiful savior, and Erica was about to joyfully make her request...

"Kusanagi-san, are you ok? Ena will save you right away—oh too late."

A bright voice reached the roof, this familiar soprano voice belonged to Seishuuin Ena.

"As expected of Erica-san, never missing out on a good opportunity."

"Thank you for your compliment, not at all. Ena-san is also very quick to act."

Running to the rooftop without any loss of breath was Ena, as well as the red-tinted blonde Erica who conversed amiably with her.

Though their dialogue was friendly, but unexpectedly there seemed to be hidden barbs in their words.

Godou felt mystified, what kind of relationship has these two people developed?

"Anyway, this incident has come to a close then? Kusanagi-san, please answer the question just now. If Ena and Yuri as well as Kusanagi-san go on a date together, our feelings for one another can be deepened."

Ena proposed without any concerns.

Date. Now that it's mentioned, it was something that Kusanagi Godou has never experienced before.

Though he has traveled together with Erica to different places, there was never any date-like feeling. Moreover, this was a first date initiated by the female side, and both of them possessed extraordinary levels of beauty and attractiveness—no, definitely cannot accept.

"Please forgive me but I must decline! I have no reason to have a date with you two!"

"If you want reasons, they do exist. Yuri and I both will become Kusanagi-san's women, so you definitely have to look after us both, and from now on our relations will only get better and better."

What was this girl openly babbling about?

Hearing this woman talk nonsense, Godou knew his face was becoming red.

"Even if we go on a date, I will not go with you two together! Public opinion will not accept such a thing!"

"Who cares what public opinion thinks, what matters is the feelings of the three of us... Ah, if Kusanagi-san wants us to alternate and take turns, then you can go first with Yuri."

No matter how he protested, Ena brushed him off with minimal effort. Godou felt a sense of despair.

Though Ena did not have the same oratory skills as Erica or her social techniques, instead, the Hime-Miko had the ability to turn any situation around to her advantage.

As Godou was about to back down from the overly troublesome opponent, a helping hand was extended from beside him.

"Ah, what a shame, but Godou is going on a date with me tomorrow."

The speaker was Erica of course, but Godou's mood became even more depressed.

This was a helping hand, no question about it, but if he reached out for it, he was just going to find himself in a new troublesome situation.

"I have never had a date with a boy, so I want the first time to be with Godou no matter what. Of course... after the second time, no one else but you can enjoy the privilege."

"Uh, with our relationship, we don't have to specifically go on a date, right..."

"It is precisely because it matters for our relationship that we need to date. Though we have traveled to many places together, but they were all troublesome affairs, and we never enjoyed the pleasures of dating, so please do accept ok?"

Erica was making Godou spoil her by using a rare begging tone of voice.

But at the same time she still carried the determined and arrogant gaze of a queen, as expected of Erica.

"Kusanagi-san, we have two people here, you can embrace both at once."

"Godou, quality trumps quantity. You are the only one in this world who can have me, Erica Blandelli, all to yourself. Don't waste it."

As Ena affectionately called out to Godou, Erica drew near and spoke softly.

Her lips approaching his ear, whispering sweet words. No good, if that continued, she will most likely steal a kiss. Godou felt his entire body stiffen.

However, what attacked this time was not lips, but an ominous warning.

"...By the way, let me say this though it counts as my duty. Godou, you remember the promise just now, right? The one where you agreed to do everything in your power as thanks. Ah, I also remembered, there was lunch a few days ago when you owed me a favor. I believe that a man who does not keep his promises at such a time would be the worst."

Godou renewed his unerring gaze at the beautiful face before him. It had become a smiling face no different from a devil. The [Diavolo Rosso] lightly nodded her head.

"Erica, to make your proposal at such a time, don't you feel a little despicable?"

"No other way, if I didn't do this, you will escape once again, I have to be serious once in a while."

Speaking in innocent tones, Erica was truly maddening yet adorable.

Come to think of it, ever since Liliana moved to Japan, the frequency of being troubled by the blonde beauty has clearly decreased. It was probably because the number of naggers has increased apart from Yuri, so she behaved a bit more.

Or perhaps she was one to adjust her style as the situation arises. Reducing those half-joking hugs, but replacing them by pouncing on sure-kill-opportunities.

Eschewing the tactics of continual advances, instead turning to calculating moments of assured victory to attack critical weak points. Just like at this moment, the strategy of cornering Godou with no avenue of escape.

"Kusanagi Godou, are you fine! Sorry, I am late."

"Godou-san, I hope you were not hurt!?"

Running to the scene were Liliana and Yuri.

The silver-haired girl was holding the slender Hime-Miko in her arms like a bridal carry.

Most likely it was because Yuri exhausted herself when the two of them ran along the corridors and up the stairs. Her physical stamina was clearly much lower than a normal girl.

Godou deduced so, but his inner thoughts became even sadder.

No one had taken any concern for the safety of Takagi.

These girls can be described as kind-hearted and merciful, and yet they treated him like this. Godou finally understood slightly, how pitiful the life of the classmate lying sprawled over the concrete floor on the roof.

"Since everyone is here, then let's start over. Kusanagi-san, who do you wish to date tomorrow? Do you want to pick the happy threesome with me and Yuri, or spend time as a couple with Erica-san?"

To the contents of Ena's question, Liliana glared with dangerous eyes at Erica who was leaning against Godou, while Yuri nodded sorrowfully.

For some reason, Godou felt like he owed everyone an apology, but he had no choice but to make a decision.

"Ah, about this... I don't actually want to be alone with Erica, but due to some complicated circumstances, I have to go out with this fellow here tomorrow..."

Godou explained in a soft voice that could barely be heard.

Embarrassed and hanging his head, his neck was embraced by the blonde beauty.

She was smiling like an angel, but to Godou she was truly the devil.

That night, Erica was lying on the bed in her own room relaxing as she reached for the cellphone.

The first person to contact was Liliana Kranjcar.

"Hello, Lily, can we talk about tomorrow?"

'You deceived my master, and intend on planning shameless lechery for tomorrow. ...Fine, how do you plan on explaining to me?'

Liliana answered most unhappily.

"I don't need to explain anything. For two people in love, a time and place not to be disturbed by others is necessary, so I would like to make a suggestion for you?"

'Suggestion?'

"Yes, after all, you will insist on being the bodyguard and secretly follow, but that will tastelessly spoil the mood, so could you not come along? That is my request."

'T-that I cannot agree. Protecting the safety of Kusanagi Godou is a necessary measure.'

"There are no safety issues if Godou is with me. If you decline this request then it's a real shame. Your latest work will be published to the world through the internet. The whole world will know of Lily's talents."

'My latest work? How do you know of such a thing?'

"What kind of story is it, that novel, eh? Leaving her home the quaint French countryside to go traveling, a girl was captured by a handsome Sicilian mafia boss, and became his maid and lover. Remember to keep that piece of dialogue: 'I will make you unable to live without my body from now on...'"

'Ooh, stop! No more, please!'

"Lily you sure are daring, even I felt embarrassed just by reading it. Because of that, I still haven't finished the whole thing. Right, let me read to the end tonight."

'Please do not continue reading it! I will stay home tomorrow and not go out, is that fine!'

Liliana roared as if she was about to cry.

'You devil! How on earth do you do it, always knowing my secrets!?'

"No comment. Secrets of the trade."

Erica answered casually. Apparently Liliana has also suspected of a betrayer in her midst, and put great effort in the location and manner of concealing her creative notebook. However Karen has stayed one step ahead of her, and always successfully made a copy and sent them over every time.

Ending that conversation, Erica next called Yuri.

'Hello, I am Mariya. Erica-san, how do you do?'

"Are you free right now? About tomorrow, have you and Ena considered following me and Godou tomorrow?"

The kind-hearted Hime-Miko did not know how to lie.

Certain in this belief, Erica asked directly. However, Yuri's response was rather emotional.

'I-I will definitely not do something so despicable!'

"Then let's not talk about Yuri, but it is possible that Ena-san will follow us."

'No, I do not think that Ena-san will consider such details.'

"So in conclusion, she does not rely on wits, but is someone who acts on impulse and instinct."

Normally, such a mindless opponent would not be worth fretting over, but when rare people possess such wild beast-like instincts, they prove to be formidable foes impossible to predict with common sense.

Regrettably, Seishuuin Ena was one of them.

'By the way... Erica-san.'

"What is it? Relax, I know Yuri is bound by many restrictions, so I approve of you by Godou's side, and I won't cast you out due to the appearance of that kind of woman. Like your feelings for Godou, at the appropriate time, I will help you and Godou get together."

Yuri was the girl who possessed the miko disposition that she lacked, as well as an extraordinary level of spirit vision.

To Erica, Yuri was the best supporting candidate she found in Japan.

Liliana once bragged that she could apply herself to all sorts of situations, but the partnership of Erica and Yuri greatly surpassed her in overall ability.

In order to oppose the greatly practical blue knight, it was necessary not to distance Yuri.

Since other than her precious abilities, this miko had other qualities that did not lose to Lily.

"I, Erica Blandelli, will never abandon those I have taken care of. If you believe in me, I will be very happy."

'I-I know I make things hard for Erica-san sometimes, but I feel that Erica-san is someone who can be trusted.'

Yuri was exceptionally adorable when she acted shy yet honest.

'However, Ena-san has been my important friend all these years... I hope that you two can get along better.'

"I don't plan on escalating things, but everything started with her."

'I am sorry... From a long time ago, that person has always loved playing practical jokes...'

"It's fine, as long as as Ena-san shows a friendly attitude, I don't want to be in conflict with her either."

'Thank you, then we have chatted for quite a while, it is almost time to hang up... Ah, finally may I make a suggestion?'

"Please."

'Umm... though Erica-san said earlier you will help resolve the awkwardness between Godou-san and I, but you do not need to worry too much about that. Because if it is really necessary, I will work hard to find a solution myself!'

Yuri went silent after saying those words, perhaps due to embarrassment, she must have been trembling all over on the other side of the line.

Imagining her state, Erica smiled, though this miko was sometimes a bit nagging, her nature was very kind, and she did things with great consideration. When acting together, she will most likely defer the role of leadership.

And she loves Godou very much, so she will never betray him.

As an ally for the rest of their lives, her character is flawless.

Though from their standpoints they will be competing for Kusanagi Godou's love, it will be fine as long as I secure victory in a direct confrontation. Truly, it would be best to let Godou marry Yuri as a concubine after me.

As the first and second wives guarding over Godou by his side and not letting any other woman gain an opening. Occasional flirting is fine, but definitely cannot let him get serious with outside women.

However, if it was someone exceptionally talented like Liliana, exceptions could be made.

But the first requirement is that they accept Erica's superior position.

"I see, then let's do as you wish, I will cheer for you."

Erica hung up the phone.

Then, tomorrow will be the first date with Godou. She will try to let Godou decide their destination and the details of the activities, how will things end up? With great anticipation, Erica went to bed early, a rare decision indeed.

Chapter 5 - Date Progression

It was Friday night, and Godou was worrying in his room.

Date. The first time in his life. And a date with no other but Erica Blandelli.

She had said 'Since it is a rare opportunity, Godou show me your true worth. I leave all the details of tomorrow's planning in your hands... If I find it boring then it's not acceptable.'

Girls were just so unreasonable—besides, where could he bring Erica that would be satisfying? Nothing came to mind at all!

Then the ringing of the cellphone interrupted his vexation. Seeing the call display on the LCD screen, Godou could not help being surprised, because it showed a very nostalgic name.

"It's been a while, Miura, how have you been?"

"Yes, well enough, how about you?"

The one who called was Godou's middle school friend back from the days when he still played baseball.

One of the few famed fastball pitchers in Tokyo, and now attending a high school in Tokyo. Naturally, he joined the baseball club which was a well-known strong team, and they participated in the National High School Baseball Championship this year.

"So, Kusanagi, you've already seen that, right?"

That? Godou was confused by what Miura was referring to.

"Yes, that. How should I put it, me, my first appearance."

"...Ah yes! Congratulations for entering the National High School Baseball Championship. Come to think of it, you have stepped upon the pitcher's mound as a First Year, I didn't even realize that."

Though Miura's high school entered the National High School Baseball Championship, their run ended with defeat in their second match. But it was during the last inning when defeat was imminent that Miura was sent to the pitcher's mound.

"Uh, is that so? But I did believe I would be able to play eventually, hahaha."

His mood brightening up so suddenly, what a simple man.

But when Godou had watched the live broadcast of that match, he couldn't think of any words to congratulate him. Miura's appearance had not been able to reverse the defeat, and in the final moments...

"No, though it's wonderful that you got to play, but when you looked at the catcher's signal and shook your head, it resulted in a two point homerun that ended the match. You were probably refusing his suggestion to throw a curve ball and decided to pitch a straight, right? Actually your judgment was..."

'Y-you really are very naggy! Since you're no longer a catcher, don't guess randomly!'

I did not guess randomly. Since Godou understood Miura's habits and interests, he could tell from observation.

Anyway, being able to see his friend active in the sport made Godou happy.

'Anyway, let's get back to the main topic. Our school which was fortunate enough to enter the Championship, is now restructuring the team in preparation for challenging the Championship again next year... And today, the coach's wife is having a baby.'

"That's great news, but what does that have to do with me?"

'Listen well. Due to this, to celebrate the birth of the child there has been an amnesty. Tomorrow I can finally take a break from practice. A whole day! I've never had a day off ever since I joined the club!'

"Oh, that truly is amnesty."

A sports club that aimed for the National High School Baseball Championship, normally could not possibly take a break on a Saturday.

Precisely because of that, Godou understood why Miura was so happy.

'So, let's all go out and have some fun tomorrow! I have already confirmed with Rui and Nakayama, and that fellow Rui said he had a great idea for

something to do together. Let us let loose together having been apart for so long.'

"Rui and Nakayama are coming as well!?"

Godou could not help feeling shocked, those two were also friends from middle school.

Though they belonged to different teams, they had worn the same uniform during the Tokyo selection. Like Godou though, they have since stopped playing baseball.

To meet his fellow baseball friends after so long, it was a great feeling.

As he thought to this point, Godou's shoulders slumped, no way, tomorrow he had to go on a date with Erica.

However, let's listen to the details of Miura's planned activities before reconsidering.

'...Something like that. I still want to find one more person, but everyone else is busy with baseball club activities and couldn't come. I guess we'll just have to find a random person to play...'

"If that's the case, I have an excellent candidate. Leave the last person to me."

Godou confirmed with Miura, and then took a deep breath.

With that the date tomorrow would not be a problem. Erica doesn't dislike playing sports and competing with others, so she should be happy, right? Finally everything is resolved.

—Of course, Godou did not realize, this was what was commonly known as digging one's grave.

On the fated Saturday, after half past eight in the morning.

At the public sports ground in the Adachi ward, in an indoor football field. Today was the opening of the amateur indoor football tournament. In such a facility—

Erica Blandelli was sighing in a most depressed manner.

"I know I was the one who let you make all the decisions, but still..."

The blonde Caucasian beauty was wearing a sporty and casual short-sleeved outfit that accentuated her graceful figure, making her stand out very much.

"After hearing we were meeting in sportswear and to bring a change of clothes, I already had an ominous feeling."

That was the message Godou left through Arianna when he called that morning.

The way she repeated her tone of voice, was more severely mocking than any other time.

"Even if I were to take a step back, and play your football tournament with you, it should not be like this. It should have been impossible for this to happen. Underestimating your inability to read the mood was my mistake."

After much complaining, Erica glanced at Godou's friends who he hasn't met for so long.

The first was Miura. For a high school first year, his build was not bad, and a very capable fastball pitcher.

The next was the slender Rui, though he was a man, he had a very cute face. Former second baseman and first hitter.

Finally was Nakayama. A puffy hairstyle and strongly built body that reminded one of a wandering warrior.^[1] Former left outfielder and strong hitter.

They too were glaring at Godou with reproachful eyes. The joy of the old friends reunion was all but gone, as if facing off against a troublemaker—

"Clearly all I wanted was to have a date with Godou alone, but you went ahead and invited three interlopers. Virtually impossible to comprehend. Are you really unable to read the mood! I am completely aghast!"

"To get a girlfriend before me, who entered the National Championship... And a foreigner to boot..."

Next to Erica who was scolding Godou, Miura was muttering like he had lost his mind.

"Kusanagi-san was always like this. He acted as if he didn't know how to get along with the opposite sex, but then the cutest girls would keep pestering him. This hasn't changed at all."

Like one in the know, Rui simply shrugged.

"You betrayer..."

Even Nakayama was crying large droplets of tears. Though his appearance was wild, he was actually a crybaby.

Finally, everyone but Godou breathed a deep sigh.

"Really, that is why I say Godou is no good. Slow, dense, and doesn't know how to read the atmosphere!"

Erica spoke as if delivering a declaration, and the other three boys nodded vigorously in agreement.

Why? Godou was completely perplexed, why is everyone talking about him like that?

"Whatever, since I'm here anyway, and this is a tournament. Escaping doesn't suit my style. Fine, indoor football? You guys make sure you don't drag me down. I, Erica Blandelli, can tolerate the incompetent, but will definitely not forgive anyone who hinders me."

Erica changed her mood and declared.

The instigating tone like the first time they met, in a certain way, this was her true colors.

"Kusanagi, your girlfriend is so arrogant! What is going on!?"

"S-sorry, because she is still angry at me, so excuse her mood. However, she is one to stick to her words, so please do your best... Also, she is not my girlfriend, just an ordinary friend."

The arrogant words of the blonde beauty displeased Miura and Godou quickly apologized. Watching this unfold, Rui laughed awkwardly while Nakayama continued to mutter to himself.

"I knew Kusanagi would suffer due to girls one day, it's exactly as I imagined."

"To build close relations with pretty girls, how nice..."

And so, the five high school first years have gathered.

The one who proposed entering the amateur indoor football tournament was Rui.

With great aptitude for sports, he not only excelled in baseball but also displayed outstanding talent in football and basketball. After graduating from middle school, he switched to doing indoor football.

By the way, for some unknown reason, Nakayama choose to join the fishing club in high school.

Other than Rui, everyone else was essentially a newbie. The opposing teams were mostly composed of university students and those who have entered the workforce, as well as former football players, so the level of competition was quite high.

Before the five participating teams started the tournament, Erica announced:

"Your jobs will be to defend and gain possession, then pass the ball to me. I will then score. Understood?"

Another delivery of grandiloquence.

Team mate Miura was very angry, Rui simply forced a smile, while Nakayama was happy for some reason.

Even though Godou insisted that team work was very important, Erica ignored him. Usually this would have been fatal, but with these team mates, they ended up winning repeatedly and obtained second place.

Truly, the athletic ability of all the team members was nothing to sneeze at.

Erica required no explanation, while the remainder were all strong healthy youths and official athletes. They were all highly selected elites gathered together, and most importantly, they were young and vigorous.

As matches reached the latter half, those in the workforce who lacked regular exercise had to stop running.

And so, the tournament lasted from nine in the morning to one in the afternoon.

...In a corner of the public sports ground, Godou was merrily chatting with his old friends, when his shirt collar was grabbed from behind.

"Hey, Godou, fun time is over. Do you really think you can just put me aside? What you should do next is take your beautiful lover on a date, right?"

Erica had returned at some point after going off to take a shower.

"Hey, you have to watch the situation. My friends are here, so..."

Not only was her attitude dismal, but fire seemed to coming out from her eyes.

Godou felt himself huddling in fear. Erica's imposing presence was currently most frightening.

"Then let us lay out everything on the table. Who is at fault from the start? You? Or me? My mood is terrible, so please give me a swift and correct answer."

"S-should be me... right?"

"Remove the 'should' and the 'right?', there is no one else but you."

Erica's words were sharp and incisive, and Godou shrank back as he realized his error.

"But you are fortunate, for I, Erica Blandelli, possesses the virtue of generosity and forgiveness. As long as you show contrition, I will not hesitate to present my love as a gift to you, how's that?"

"T-then—what should I do now—"

As he tried hard to turn his head, he found Erica glaring at him.

Godou panicked. If this was baseball—no, no matter what kind of competition, or even a battle against a god or a devil king, he will always find a way!

Unable to bear the heavy atmosphere, Rui tried to lighten the situation.

"Ok, you don't have to mind us any longer, Kusanagi. Why don't you and Erica-san go for lunch now, just the two of you!"

"Eh, how can we let Kusanagi be alone with his girlfriend! I will not allow it!"



"Nakayama, I leave Miura in your care."

"Yes, just do your part and don't mess things up."

Following Rui's directions, Nakayama immediately reached out his hands and covered Miura's mouth from behind. Miura could only roar, unable to form words. Satisfied, the former second baseman happily said:

"Quick, leave while the coast is clear. Goodbye, Kusanagi-san."

"Ah, yes. Sorry... then let's go, Erica."

As his three old friends watched them go, Godou and Erica left the sports ground.

Finally, the chance arrived for Godou to be alone with Erica that day.

In any case, Godou decided to walk towards the main streets with lots of shops.

"Godou, my love for you has never changed, but that is simply not enough to suppress the vortex of anger forming in my heart, please take a little care in the activities from here on, ok?"

"Has what I've done really been so terrible...?"

"If you have something to say, then speak out clearly. If you want to know exactly where you have messed up, I can grade each of your actions starting from yesterday."

"Spare me. It's all my fault, ok. But please don't take out your anger on my friends."

"If this was the second or the third date, then no matter how displeased I felt, I would still treat them as guests with utmost politeness. However today is an exception and I cannot allow it."

Angrily finishing her words, Erica shifted her gaze away from Godou.

"A first date is a rare event, and clearly a day to commemorate. You truly are dense, and completely failed to understand how I feel!"

Godou surrendered. To think Erica would express her feelings with such forthcoming honesty.

Her face that had turned away in anger, perhaps carried a bit of shyness.

"Yes, yes it's my fault, I will try to improve in the future. Please don't be angry, be happy."

"It's fine, you don't have to apologize. Actually from the very beginning I had no expectations from you!"

Erica's tone was still very critical, and Godou tried very hard to emphasize he was reflecting on his actions. In order to placate her, he spent over twenty minutes.

Finally causing her anger to subside, they decided to find a place to eat.

"Arianna originally said she could prepare lunchboxes for us—"

Erica mentioned the name of her live-in assistant and maid.

"But since we often eat her lunches at school, so I told her not to, as it is rare enough for us to go out on a date."

"Yes, and I would feel bad asking her to make lunch on a holiday."

"Perhaps it would be better if I made something for you personally?"

To Erica's suggestion, Godou immediately shook his head.

"That thought has never crossed my mind."

It is rumored that Erica's only cooking experience was boiling water for instant noodles.

This wise, capable, and universally talented girl, was in essence, an even more sheltered high class young lady than Yuri. Uh, probably best to just call her a princess or a queen.

To imagine Erica toiling in the kitchen with her un honed cooking skills, perhaps such a scene might make one smile, but it definitely did not suit this girl.

Rather than watch Erica suffering at something she was not good at, Godou preferred seeing her glory and prestige like a princess.

"Is that so? But being described that way does not make me happy."

"Everyone is different, isn't that for the best? Anyway, what do you want to eat?"

Since they have arrived in an area with many different restaurants, Godou sought her opinion.

A Tokyo native and a Milanese, there was probably no commonality in their eating preferences, but fortunately neither of them were picky eaters, and any choice would have satisfied them both.

"Let's go to that Chinese restaurant first? A safe bet."

Right in front of their eyes, was a tiny Chinese restaurant.

Ethnic Chinese were present in every country of the world, and of course Italy was no exception. While staying there, the two of them had often visited Chinese restaurants.

"I don't really want to, I visited a similar shop a few days ago."

"In that case, which one should we pick..."

"Trying something Japanese occasionally would be nice, how about sushi and tempura?"

In truth, Erica's understanding of Japanese culture was nowhere advanced as her mastery of the Japanese language.

Once you realize that she has merely spent three months in this country, too much cannot be expected from her. However, it would seem rather odd that she can converse with others in perfect Japanese yet she is foreign to Japanese culture.

But to pick those two things out of everything else, Godou could only laugh awkwardly as he surveyed the surroundings.

"It's actually a bit unsuitable for high school students to be eating those types of food. I don't know where you want to go, but I'm kind of against it... However, if it's that kind of shop, I can still accept..."

Discovering a rotary sushi franchise, Godou made a suggestion but Erica refused.

"Though I have no idea how well that shop is rated, I don't want to eat there. How should I put it, the server uniform looks smelly, and the shop

gives an impression of zero individuality. Compared to tolerating bad cuisine, I would consider wasting time in that kind of a shop more of a suffering experience. Let's not go there."

Without even checking out the decor within the shop, she had already made up her mind with a single glance from the outside.

Erica's value system was rather peculiar. Compared to fast food or family restaurants that were small and clean, but lacking in distinctive style, she preferred eating at roadside stalls or messy and dirty little shops.

Caring neither for taste, appearance nor comfort, but deciding where she went based on 'level of interest.'

The fact that she depended heavily on the slightly problematic Arianna, was probably due to the same reason. Godou was once again reminded of her unique tastes.

"Let's go there then, it is Japanese and should probably have what you like to eat."

"I see, it feels ok, but I can't tell what this shop is selling."

It was a Osaka-style okonomiyaki^[2] shop that had a quiet atmosphere.

Opened for business since the middle of the Shouwa period, the shop gave off a sense of cleanliness, and Godou and Erica passed through the curtains and entered the door.

Out from the kitchen came a middle-aged lady who brought them to their seats in the hall. There were no other customers.

"...Iron plate?"^[3]

It goes without saying that Erica was not kneeling on the tatami, but sitting slanted.

Seeing the large iron plate unique to this kind of restaurant, Erica tilted her head incredulously.

"Using this metal plate, you fry things to eat yourself."

"Ah, it's a self-served restaurant, then let us start quickly."

"The fire was just lit, and the iron plate hasn't heated up yet, you can't start even if you wanted to."

The two first chatted and then waited for the food to arrive.

What they ordered was the assorted pancake and the pork pancake that this restaurant innovated.

Of course Godou was not some kind of optimist, and he never expected Erica to start frying the pancakes herself, so he placed the ingredients on the iron plate, adjusted the shape, then repeated frying until it was done, and finally added the condiments.

"Ah, I never knew you could cook so well, this gives me a bit of a surprise."

Erica praised Godou as she ate the assorted pancake that had been divided into several slices.

"Simply spreading out ingredients to fry can't really be considered cooking, at most it's just imitating how others do it."

"Really? ...Then let me try."

"If you are serious, I won't stop you... But you sure you're fine?"

In terms of results, Godou's worries were for naught.

Though all she did was watch from the side, it turned out that Erica's frying skills were not bad at all.

Furthermore, she made delicious fried noodles just through Godou's verbal instructions, and even successfully fried the monjayaki^[4], a task supposed to be difficult for novices.

"Godou, you are truly fortunate. To this day there has been no one else who has eaten cuisine personally prepared by me... even grandfather. You must savor this from the bottom of your heart."

"I am truly thankful for this meal you have prepared... But really, when you put your mind to it, you really can do it quite well..."

Godou marveled at Erica's talent as he used his chopsticks to pick up the food.

But then again for such a small task as frying a pancake, one could hardly feel her earnest effort. Truly it was very much in her style.

Just like a queen bestowing rewards upon a subject, or a princess allowing a knight to kiss her hand, Erica watched with such an expression as Godou ate.

"However, cooking once in a while feels quite nice. If you don't mind, I will do it again. Just for Godou, I will personally cook."

"Uh, sure if another chance comes along, thank you for your efforts..."

"Ah, that tone of voice doesn't sound too confident. You've already witnessed my talent just now, right?"

"I know you are very capable, but if you suddenly have the impulse to make something 'that seems very interesting' and end up creating something like Anna's cooking, then my stomach is in peril."

"The way you put it, really sounds interesting..."

"Which is exactly what I'm saying, don't go making those strange creations!"

Anna was, in other words, Arianna. In the field of cooking, she was a woman who could reach world class levels of innovation. The two of them finished their meal with Anna as the topic of conversation.

Erica mentioned that she had something to do at Ueno, so the the two of them set forth.

Due to the fact that Godou protested strongly against taking a taxi, they switched to taking the streetcar to their destination.

"What you meant by something to do, couldn't be shopping, right?"

"Correct, I want to buy a few articles of western clothing."

Having the experience of being dragged off by his sister to accompany her shopping, Godou began to review his options for killing boredom, but he was greatly surprised when they reached their destination.

"T-this is not a clothing store! I-It's an underwear store!?"

"Broadly speaking, this also falls under western clothing. Godou, don't be so hung up on these minor details."

Located in one of the high class department stores in Ueno, was an underwear store on the floor specializing in female fashion.

All sorts of different mini articles of clothing (cannot describe them in too much detail) laid out in rows, or swirling like a vortex into a small hill, or forming their own universe like a mandala.^[5]

Erica smiled at Godou who was just about to get up and bolt for the door.

"I need your preference as a basis for judgment. So why don't you start, tell me which style you'd like me to try?"

"Any style will do, after all there's no difference!"

"To say something like that, you are really hopeless. One day I will have you strip them off personally, isn't that right? I believe they have to be chosen with care."

"S-strip off—!?"

Godou was silent, for her to say something so bold in such a place.

And while they were conversing, the saleslady (looks about twenty-something, and quite pretty too) must have heard!

Stealing a glance at her, the saleslady returned a polite smile.

Unlike the so-called professional smile, this was the kind of smile that seemed to say 'ah, these kids are so young.'

"Anyway, why do you have to come to this kind of store, they must sell underwear near where you live?"

"You won't be able to buy imports unless you come to this part of town. Though the ones made in Japan have great quality and the designs are rather cute, they don't really match my image. What do you think of this one?"

Erica pointed at a pair of white panties sewn with plenty of lace.

Applying a cutting to the nonessential portions of the fabric to create a light fluttery feeling, an air of regal and extraordinarily upper class taste is exuded, achieving a fully glamorous effect.

It really did suit Erica very well... no no.

Godou forcefully shook his head, and dispelled this frivolous thought.

"That piece was imported from France, truly excellent."

The saleslady from just now, chose a perfect opportunity to chime in.

"If you like it, why don't you try it out?"

"I see, then I will. So Godou, I want your opinion, accompany me to the changing room and let me listen to your thoughts."

"W-who would agree to such a thing?"

Erica ended up trying a whole stack, and decided to buy them all.

The merchandise was to be delivered to her home, and settled by credit card.

Though he often witnessed Erica spending money so freely on shopping, Godou had yet to get used to it. Still, after they left the store, his mood lightened a lot.

"Your mission has not ended, can you go over there with me?"

Erica spoke to Godou whose mood had turned for the better.

The two of them left the department store and entered the crowd.

As expected of the Ueno area on a holiday, it was very lively.

After leaving JR and Ameyoko, Erica advanced towards the direction of nearby Yushima, with Godou trailing after her.

Choosing her path without a shred of hesitation, it seemed like she has fully accustomed herself to the geography of Tokyo.

That was Erica. Even though she was not well-versed in traditional Japanese culture or the customs and habits of ordinary people, she had mastered the geography around Tokyo as well as all places that affected either her organization or her own personal activities.

Entering a residential neighborhood near Ueno and following an uphill slope, Godou was taken to the boundaries of what appeared to be a cluster of shady looking love motels.

Godou fell silent, what on earth were Erica's intentions!?

"Erica, wait a moment first. What are you planning next?"

"You ask me what I'm doing... To make preparations to resolve the conflict that arose recently."

Godou felt greatly shaken.

Speaking of conflict resolution, could she mean clarifying their ambiguous relationship in a decisive manner?

—How do you truly feel about me? Today you must give a straight answer.

—This time I will not allow you to dodge the issue like usual, please show some manliness at this time, and demonstrate clearly with your words and attitude.

Godou feared that Erica would catch him unaware with such lines, and wracked his brain in preparation for responses.

Was he truly cornered this time...?

"What is it, Godou? Your face looks like you have a stomach ache, are you unwell?"

Erica noticed his odd behavior and questioned.

This woman had the attractive exterior of a devil, the strong will to materialize her wishes, the overwhelming charisma that was impossible to resist, and in this kind of situation, an unbelievable power that exceeded normal parameters.

However, in reality she was just looking at Godou with an incredulous expression.

"You ask me why? Think about it, this place, how should I put it..."

"This place? Is there a problem with this place? Though I did notice there are a number of strange buildings."

"Eh...?"

"Now that it's mentioned, the map did indicate there were motels here, but there should be no reason to run such businesses in this dismal neighborhood, right? And the buildings are so unfashionable, though they are quite interesting in their own way."

Erica responded in casual tones.

Could it be that Erica... she didn't know that motels had that kind of connotation...?

That's right, she is completely unaware. Truly the young mistress of the Blandelli family! Having reached this conclusion, Godou felt as if a heavy load had been lifted off his back. Great, there was still plenty of buffer time until the ultimate situation will be reached.

"You don't look too well? If you don't mind, perhaps we could rent a room around here to take a rest?"

"No no, I'm fine. Continue onwards! Anyway, where are you going?"

Godou responded loudly, and Erica suspiciously stared at Godou as she pointed to the shrine in front of them.

"That's the place, let's enter."

Before the row of motels was a little shrine.

A quiet place that was completely different from the nearby Yushima Seidou or Kanda Shrine.

On the entrance torii hung a plaque with the name Tamaura Shrine.

The kannushi^[6] was not there and no one seemed to be there. After surveying the surroundings, Erica placed her hand on the door of the front hall and pushed. Opening, the door did not seem to be locked.

"How careless. But even if they forgot to lock the door, we can't go in so casually."

"Originally I was just planning on surveying the outside, but it turns out no one is here... No problem, after all this is a public shrine anyway."

Walking into the front hall as they spoke, they found the shrine contained surprising signs of someone living there.

The reason was the neatly arranged objects in the corner.

Sleeping bag, many magazines and manga, dried bread and fruit and other nonperishable food—these were all piled up in an organized manner, but their presence conspicuously clashed with the shrine surroundings.

Erica glanced at these items in the front hall and softly spoke in deep thought.

"Nothing that can be used as a clue... what a waste of time."

"Come on, behave, what you're doing right now is against the law."

After some nagging from Godou, the Italian-born beauty finally left the premises.

However, she immediately spoke such a line:

"This place yielded nothing useful, let's hurry to the next destination."

Hastened by Erica to the next place to visit, Godou was shocked once again. It turned out to be the high school section of Jounan Academy, the school that they attended.

"I think Godou's instincts are very good."

Erica praised him as they walked in the sports ground on this holiday.

There were members of sports clubs engaged in activities on the field, but the rest of the school was very quiet.

"I think it's very bad actually... since I'm often labeled dense and slow."

Just a couple of hours ago, he had been scolded severely by this girl.

However, the other party Erica simply went "hmph" and made a gesture ridiculing him.

"That only applies to the way you treat women. What I referred to just now, were your instincts towards supernatural phenomenon such as magic and divinities. Basically, you have acute instincts towards danger just like a wild beast, that's true right?"

Now that she put it that way, it did feel likely to be true.

After becoming a campione, it was as if he had gained a sixth sense that sometimes made Godou aware of things that he could not possibly know about. But why bring this ability up right now?

"Since I am expecting results from Godou's instincts, I have a question for you. From my sources I have heard that someone has done something unusual to the school, probably some sort of spell. Do you sense any signs of tampering?"

"No, I feel nothing..."

Godou tried to survey Jounan Academy's school buildings, sports ground, and foundations, but couldn't sense anything.

The only feeling obtained was the sense of emptiness from the lack of students on a weekend.

"You need to be more serious. Concentrate and let your senses become clearer. If you try that, your spirit vision might even end up having a higher success rate than Lily."

"Uh, how could that be possible? I don't have any spirit vision to begin with."

Godou thought back at Liliana's abilities as both a knight and a witch.

In the battle against Perseus he had witnessed her spirit vision, and then Mariya has also shown him the powers of spirit vision many times. He clearly did not possess it.

"Spirit vision refers to the ability to extract [Memories of the Void] from the [Boundary of Life and Immortality] in the Astral Realm. The reason why you often display extraordinary instincts, could possibly be due to the campione's sixth sense peering into the Astral Realm."

Erica's words led Godou to think back to a certain buried memory.

The Boundary of Life and Immortality, it seemed like he has heard of it before. But [Memories of the Void] and such stuff were totally incomprehensible, so Godou decided to just forget about it.

"Perhaps using that ability, you can obtain something that approaches spirit vision. Try again... Also, perhaps Yuri's example has misled you, but even for European witches, obtaining spirit vision is extremely difficult."

"Is that so? But didn't Liliana say that she had spirit vision as well?"

"That is correct, but the crux of the matter is the success rate. The chance for a witch to successfully activate spirit vision effectively is at best ten percent, but from my estimates Yuri definitely exceeds sixty percent."

"How can it differ by so much!"

"Yes, if a situation required spirit vision from witches, usually they would gather dozens of them so that the overall success rate is raised through quantity."

Godou finally got the point. Come to think of it, Liliana did explain to him during the battle against Perseus, that it was the grace of Athena that allowed her to obtain spirit vision abilities that surpassed her previous level.

Now Godou finally understood the reason why Erica has been so preoccupied with Yuri ever since the first time they met.

"Why don't you ask Mariya for help?"

"Think about why I can't do that? This has political implications."

"When you said someone... Could it be a member of that whatever Committee?"

"Wrong, this time the Committee is the side trying to hinder her, but they cannot help but acquiesce to her actions with frustration—can you understand?"

"A woman... then it's Seishuuin Ena, looks like Yuri and the rest will have lots of trouble."

Finally understanding after much explanation... hearing Godou's exclamation, Erica shrugged her shoulders.

"Lily and I can still act independently, even if we lose support from the magic associations of our home country, it won't be a huge problem... But if you look at the girls around Godou using this perspective, then Yuri's situation is the most delicate. You have to be more observant of these things."

"Yes, yes, I get it."

Failing to pay attention in those areas, this was something that needed to be improved. As Godou thought, he decided to answer Erica's request.

In order to look for anything out of the ordinary, Godou ran throughout the school.

"...Uh, nothing strange was found."

"Still didn't work, seems like you're no good for anything outside of battle."

Hearing his simple report, Erica was exasperated.

Godou felt the same way. Even though his instincts were very good, they only seemed to work in the heat of battle.

During battle, in the instant when his instincts kick in, there was a feeling like sparks exploding.

Godou tried focusing his eyes on the school walls.

I hate this place. Such a thought flowed into his mind. Enemy, to be more precise, he could feel the presence of the enemy floating around.

"I found a bad feeling around this area, but other than that, nothing."

"This wall? Perhaps some kind of barrier was erected?"

Erica and Godou began a serious discussion in front of the wall of the school building.

However the answer to their questions, came from an unexpected direction.

"That isn't a barrier, but I won't go into the details. Ama no Murakumo and I did a little tinkering there, but not just in one location."

The two turned to look behind.

Seishuuin Ena was approaching from the opposite side of the sports ground.

Wearing her uniform despite being the weekend, with the familiar long and narrow bag slung over her shoulder.

"The many-fenced place of Izumo / Of the many clouds rising—To dwell there with my spouse / Do I build a many-fenced palace: Ah, that many-fenced palace!" Have you heard of this? This is the enchanted song of Susanoo, the one I inscribed on eight different places when I infiltrated the school many days ago. I knew it would come in handy eventually."

The friendly yamato nadeshiko, innocent and forthcoming.

Though she looked the same as usual, but Godou sensed a strange feeling.

"I came to inspect them today. If they didn't take effect in a crisis, I would be very troubled. But why are you two here? Aren't you supposed to be on a date?"

Her tone becoming sharp, Ena turned her gaze to Erica. The girl known as the [Diavolo Rosso], answered with a polite smile.

"We are on a date right now, but we just decided to investigate Ena-san's prepared pranks on the way, that's all."

"Really, then I'm sorry. Have I disturbed you two?"

Though it sounded like a calm conversation, an unfriendly atmosphere seemed to be hanging between the two of them. Godou frowned.

"I don't know what conflict exists between the two of you, but could you two not cause any strange commotions?"

"Understood, hubby... though that's how I want to address you, it turns out to be really difficult."

Ena let down the bag from her shoulder, and opened it dexterously with one hand.

"Other than declaring myself to be Kusanagi-san's woman, I have one other goal."

"Goal?"

"Eliminating me, most likely."

Erica spoke in a sarcastic tone. The Hime-Miko showed a "that's right" expression, and smiled.

An expression that had not been shown previously, it was a wild grin that belonged to a carnivore in the middle of a hunt.

"Kusanagi-san is a super important person, so letting a foreign lady to be hanging by his side is no good. That's what the people back home say. Hoho, though it's fine for me either way, but..."

The bag fell to the ground, and the sheathed sword was revealed.

"If this mission definitely needs to be accomplished, then there's no way around it. And hearing that the opponent is an Italian knight has gained Ena's interest. At the same time, grampsy has also felt amused by the surprise."

"Grampsy? The one who bestowed the divine sword on you?"

Erica planned to elucidate the detailed situation at that time.

"How detailed knowledge, as expected of Erica-san. Yes, grampsy can be quite a terrifying person. Let alone the Hime-Miko, even the History Compilation Committee members have to fearfully cater to his mood."

Ena drew the sword from its sheath.

The blade was infused with a sacred silvery white light, full of imperial splendor.

Due to the emergency situation unfolding, Godou and Erica exchanged glances.

(Let me handle her first while you observe for now. If you used your authority, it would probably kill her.)

(Uh, that's right... but don't go too far.)

Godou felt uneasy, but decided to leave things to Erica for now.

The special powers usurped from Verethragna's authority included monstrous strength, super speed, lightning, solar fire, and others... A multitude of powerful abilities, but none of them were suitable for dealing with a normal human.

Unless the enemy was an immortal god, otherwise Godou would not want to activate his authority.

Once Godou stepped back, Erica summoned Cuore di Leone in her hand.

The sword with the narrow blade that gave off a chilling brightness.

Watching the red and black knight enter a stance, Ena happily declared:

"Since this is school on the weekends there's no need to mind Yuri then. Having Kusanagi-san present is a bit troublesome, but I've already made preparations to handle him, so let us determine the victor right here!"

Having spoken, she kicked the ground once.

With wide strides, Ena thrusted with her magnificent sword.

Jumping to the side to evade the attack, Erica counterattacked with a thrust from Cuore di Leone. However, Ena dodged by lightly twisting her body like a bat.

Erica glared with sharp eyes while Ena stared back savagely.

In the next instant, their swords began to clash intensely.

Erica brandished the lightweight Cuore di Leone, thrusting continuously without pause.

A series of attacks like a hail of bullets.

But Ena parried all attacks by lightly waving the blade of her sword in a left-right motion.

Her sword should be far longer and heavier than the magic sword of the lion.

But in spite of that, Ena showed a perfect defense and could even counterattack while she focused her attention on the attacks of the blonde female knight.

Erica skillfully defended Ena's return strikes, but always in the nick of time.

Who could have thought that Japan had a girl whose swordsmanship was able to match Erica as equals!

As Godou felt surprised by the unexpected revelations, he desperately tried to come up with a plan.

By the time his thoughts returned to the battle, both combatants' attacks had become more and more intense.

If this continued, it would likely end with one side heavily injured. How could their fight be interrupted? He did not have any weapons and cannot use his authority. Then as a man he was down to one weapon.

"Damn it, after all I probably can't die, so let's take a gamble!"

Godou possessed the [Ram] incarnation which allowed him to revive from near death injuries, but if he died instantly it was useless. Godou ignored his rational mind and told himself 'as long as I'm lucky, I won't die' and took action.

Erica and Ena continued to exchange attacks fiercely.

Godou used his own body to block the space in between their swinging swords.

"--Godou!?" "--Kusanagi-san!?"

Erica and Ena put away their weapons simultaneously, and prevented a tragedy at the last instant.

If either of them had been slightly lacking in reflexes, judgment or swordsmanship, then Godou would have been sliced apart.

"Godou, what are you doing! There are limits to stupidity!"

"I had no other way. Other than this, I couldn't think of another method to stop you two..."

To Erica who seldom lost her composure, Godou answered with his trembling body.

No matter what, he narrowly missed death and the battle was halted. In terms of results, his decision was correct.

"Y-you shouldn't be so reckless, but now I understand, it's something like that."

Ena seemed to have confirmed something. Understand? What did she understand?

"In order to make Yuri, who is slow to warm up to others, fall for you, I've always suspected that you must have great manliness somewhere. As expected it's that cliché? 'To protect the woman I love, I can give my life' kind of deal?"

"Nothing like that. I didn't fully consider before I acted... Also, I was trying to protect you too."

Godou's denial made Seishuuin Ena go 'eh?' with doubt.

"Not only Erica, I also don't want to see Seishuuin get hurt. Anyway, to resolve conflicts with swords is not right. You should have a good discussion to find a peaceful solution."

"Really? So I have already been added to your list of 'my women'? Aw shucks, how embarrassing..."

"No way! How can anyone do nothing when they see someone about to be sliced to death!"

Watching the Hime-Miko getting a little shy, Godou protested strongly.

But she was unaffected, and continued to speak complacently.

"Looks like as long as Kusanagi-san is present, we can't fight properly. Then I will heed grampsy's advice, and use that move..."

Ena who had been holding the Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi with both hands, let go of the blade with her left and reached into her pocket.

What she took out was a cellphone.

"Oh by the way, I'm not making a phone-call, it's just a habit. In order to enter into a dialogue with the other world, this is necessary for the dialogue to succeed—grampsy, even though this happened earlier than planned, but please use that move."

As she spoke softly into the cellphone, Godou and Erica became suspicious, but Ena immediately threw down the phone.

The sky immediately became dark and the surroundings became dominated by darkness.

Thinking it might be cloud cover, Godou looked up and was quite shocked.

The sun in the sky was entirely darkened, and around the black circle was a white corona. It was almost like a solar eclipse!

And then strong winds began to blow.

Cold winds that seemed strong enough to blow an entire body away and cut open skin.

"Whoever is swiftest among the boatmen of the Uji ferry will come to me.^[7] God whom I worshipped, exists no longer! If you believe god once existed, sacrifice well!^[8]"

Within the world sealed away by darkness, Ena chanted the incantation in a loud voice.

To Godou, the spell words carried by the chant felt like they were tearing up the world, and his body was filled with vigor and battle spirit. Was it a god? Was a god coming here?

Godou stared at the wall just now.

In that corner, an enemy's presence could be felt slightly.

Massive amounts of divine power were being released, and the same energy could be felt from seven other locations within the school.

"Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi, is the divine blade used by Susanoo and Yamato Takeru... these two heroes. However, they were not only warriors who tamed their enemies by force but also highly intelligent heroes who employed deception when necessary. In other words, patron gods of deceit, the ever-changing, as well as thievery. Especially Susanoo, he was a god who even tricked the sun and covered it. Even if you are king, there is no way you can escape from this trap!"

Ena's solemn voice was heard for the first time.

In order to prevent the unpredictable outcome, Erica chopped at the Hime-Miko.

However it was too late and the land beneath Godou's feet had turned into darkness.

What was originally concrete became completely jet black.

"Ooh wa wa wa ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah!?"

His body and limbs sank and disappeared into the darkness.

Godou yelled as he resisted with all his might, but even as he thrashed his arms and legs there was nothing for him to grab or kick.

The result was being swallowed by the void black space.

Godou fell into the darkness and completely vanished.

In that instant, Erica wielded Cuore di Leone and slashed at Ena with all her strength.

But it was blocked by the Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi.

As the magic sword of the lion and the divine sword pressed against each other, the two girls began to argue.

"Where did you send Godou away to!?"

"I don't know either, because the one who did it was grampsy."

Ena responded to Erica who had discarded her usual elegant composure.

Come to think of it, what the Hime-Miko just said.

The god of trickery and deceit, the god of the ever-changing, the god of thievery—in other words these identities are all con artists! Erica recalled

the Prometheus Grimoire, the one that could steal divine powers. Possessing the same qualities—but with a mysterious power many times greater than the grimoire, Godou was taken away!

"I think the king is probably now in the Ghostly Realm, and grampsy isn't going to release him back to the real world."

"The Ghostly Realm? Could it be the Astral Realm—the Boundary of Life and Immortality!?"

"Ah, so it is also called that? I think the Committee members would be more knowledgeable in these areas."

Erica shuddered as she watched the Hime-Miko who casually answered her questions.

One who could freely use a divine artifact that ordinary mortals could not.

One who could communicate with supernatural existences living in the Boundary of Life and Immortality.

"It looks like amongst the Hime-Miko's, there are quite a few girls possessing extraordinary dispositions."

"Yes. Ena can hear the voice of god, and can borrow god's power slightly. If I explain it this way, I believe Erica-san can understand?"

A user of divine possession! Erica was speechless.

A miko that possessed such a disposition was even rarer than for spirit vision. If the Hime-Miko's were able to recruit among its ranks someone with such legendary powers, looks like they will turn out to be an unimaginably troublesome organization.

Ena seemed to have tired of answering questions, and jumped away from the state of pointing their blades at each other.

"Perhaps due to being connected to grampsy, some spirits from that side have filtered over..."

Ena was muttering, and straightened her arm, pointing Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi forward.

This resulted in the sword altering its form.

From a straight sword it slowly turned into a curved blade.

The originally sacred white light from the blade turned black, and the body of the blade appeared to be burning with black flames—a form that seemed to herald catastrophe.

"Did you know? The one who brought the technique of forging curved blades to this country was a barbarian sword-smith seen as an enemy by the government."

Ena spoke softly.

Like the dark and icy cold wind blowing across execution grounds.

"If the blade is curved, slicing power will be increased. The forging techniques of the Ezo^[9] sword-smith were inherited by the craftsmen of Oshu, and from there promoted to the rest of the country... Absorbing the slaughtered barbarian power for its own use, Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi also possesses this characteristic."

Holding the jet black divine sword, Ena's face revealed a frightening smile.

Rather than a miko serving god, it was more like the belligerent face of a ghost of the sword.

"Assimilating the rebellious barbarian power for its own use—the sword of conquest, that is Ena's partner, come let us duel!"

Erica took a deep breath.

She could feel Ena's magical power disappearing from her body.

In order to perform powerful magic or use an authority's killing move, most magi and campiones will raise their magical power to the maximum. Erica has witnessed it many times already.

But Ena was doing the opposite. Her power and presence was approaching zero—almost as if she no longer existed.

And entering the vessel of the Hime-Miko, was a solemn divine presence.

"So which one is your grampsy, may I ask one more time?"

"Uh? What do you mean by which one?"

Erica asked the surprised Ena once again.

"You just mentioned, right? There are two gods who possess this divine sword, Susanoo and Yamato Takeru. So the grampsy you keep mentioning, which one is he?"

"It's Susanoo! But everyone calls him this unbecoming nickname, the Old One!"

The storm god of conquest who held the attribute of steel.

Protected by that kind of deity, a user of the legendary divine sword would be a formidable foe indeed. Erica anxiously looked at the spot where Godou disappeared.

The jet black darkness continued to swirl upon the surface of the ground.

It was the deep darkness that swallowed the young campione that she loved.

At this moment, a rash idea entered her heart, but she believed there was value in taking the challenge. What made the [Diavolo Rosso] steel her determination was that once the darkness disappeared, so will all clues to track him down.

One of Erica's tenets was to avoid, as much as possible, battles she was unlikely to win.

If she was to escape now, she will definitely regret afterwards. In the instant she thought that, her decision was made.

Erica also jumped into the darkness that swallowed Godou.

"Uh, you really did that. Very amazing! But I won't let you escape!"

What on earth is this woman. Erica was speechless.

Seeing her jump in, Ena also followed immediately.

And so, the two girls jumped into the mysterious space that captured the campione.

Translator's Notes and References

1. ↑ **rounin**: rounin (浪人) was a term for a masterless samurai during Japan's feudal period. According to the samurai code (bushido), a samurai was obliged to commit suicide on the loss of their lord, and was meant to suffer great shame if they chose not to honor the code. Since these former samurai could not legally take up new professions, they sought to make a living with their swords. Some worked as mercenaries or bodyguards while others turned to crime. The criminals of the Edo period gave the rounin a persisting image of thugs, cutthroats and vagrants.
2. ↑ **okonomiya**: a Japanese savory fried pancake that contains a variety of ingredients.
3. ↑ **teppanyaki**: a style of Japanese cuisine where food is cooked on a flat iron plate (teppan means iron plate).
4. ↑ **monjayaki**: a specialty of the Kantou region, it is similar to okonomiyaki except the dough is more liquid.
5. ↑ **mandala**: a Sanskrit word meaning "circle," refers to circular concentric diagrams with spiritual and ritual significance in both Buddhism and Hinduism.
6. ↑ **kannushi**: (神主) the person responsible for the maintenance of a Shinto shrine as well as for leading worship
7. ↑ **Kojiki**: dating from the early 8th century, the "Record of Ancient Matters"(古事記) is the oldest surviving chronicle in Japan and is a collection of myths concerning the origin of the four home islands of Japan. The lyrics quoted by Ena comes from Volume II of the Kojiki.
8. ↑ **Man'youshuu**: the "Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves"(万葉集) is the oldest existing collection of Japanese poetry. The second half of Ena's incantation comes from poem #406 in the Man'youshuu.
9. ↑ **Ezo**: (蝦夷) the name of a native tribe in Japan that was eventually driven by the government to Hokkaido and the northern part of Honshu. Scholars are divided on whether the Ezo are the same as the Ainu.

Chapter 6 - Encounter in the Ghostly Realm

Godou found himself in a mountain at some unknown location.

After being swallowed by the suspicious darkness, he came to find himself in this place.

It was deep in the mountains with lush greenery.

Heavy with the smell of soil and trees, there was also a small flowing stream beside him.

If it was on a sunny day, taking a walk here would have been very comfortable. But regrettably it was raining, and massive droplets splattered all over him.

Howling winds filled the sky and mercilessly stole warmth from his drenched body.

In addition, Godou's bodily condition was not very well at this time.

A strong feeling of nausea, terrible cold and headache made Godou worry if he had caught a flu.

Though it would have been best to get moving to find shelter from this storm, he did not have the strength. Squatting down for about three minutes and enduring the sense of nausea, he felt much better.

"This feeling is almost like carsickness..."

The headache was still present, but wasn't a problem. Godou got up and looked around. The water in the stream beside him was very turbid and flowing rapidly due to the drainage of the rainwater. From the way the stream ran, this place must be quite remote in the deep mountains.

Godou discovered a little house in the upstream direction, and started making his way towards it.

Finding shelter from the rain first, though it doesn't seem like a wooden house on the riverbank in such pouring rain would be particularly safe, it would still be better than standing outside.

Then again, he still worried very much about the safety of Erica and Seishuuin Ena.

While worrying about them, Godou reached the door of the little house.

Like a rustic wooden house from a historical drama, with a simple glance one was certain that modern amenities like electricity, gas, and running water were alien concepts.

The sliding door at the entrance was open and Godou peered inside.

An old man who appeared to be the owner, sat crosslegged in front of the stove.

With a height of at least 180cm, he had a very tall build, and was only wearing a crude kimono which revealed his strongly built body which did not match his age. His muscle bound body would put most bodybuilders to shame.

The old man's expression was very stubborn and matched his solid build very well.

"Kusanagi Godou, please enter. My apologies for suddenly summoning you here."

To be named so abruptly.

By this point, Godou knew who he was.

Because, the body that was charged full of energy to fight already gave him the answer—the old man before him was a god.

"My miko has brought you trouble, but please endure for a little while longer, because that fellow said she wanted to have a duel with that barbaric little girl, so I could only bring you here. After all they are both female and human, so why don't you let them fight to their hearts' content?"

"...Who are you? And what kind of god?"

Hearing the questions, the old man smiled.

Though he appeared to be very strict, he unexpectedly gave off a sense of kindness and intimacy.

"I am the god known as Susanoo. You may call me old mister or old man, but do not use grampsy. Having one brat Ena calling me such an idiotic nickname is enough."

Jumping into the darkness that Godou disappeared into—
Erica finally reached the end, but arrived at an unknown riverside.
The distance across the river wasn't very wide, but the flow was quite rapid and swimming across would be very difficult. However, the water in this river was beautiful and crystal clear.
It gave off a feeling that couldn't possibly come from a river in the twenty three wards of Tokyo.
"This really is the Astral Realm... right? Could I have entered the Boundary of Life and Immortality?"
Erica knelt on the ground panting.
The air seemed very turbid and felt like even if you breathed, there wasn't enough oxygen. It was very likely the body was not accustomed to this world.
But there was nothing that could be done about it.
Moving from the ground to the Astral Realm was [World Transfer], a type of ultimate high difficulty magic, and required intaking a precious potion before hand.
It was medication to activate spirit capabilities and help the body adapt to this otherworldly realm.
This was a world where spirit ranked higher than the body, and ectoplasm ranked higher than matter.
Magi who had stepped foot in the Astral Realm were extremely rare, because obtaining the magical ritual to transfer to the other world as well as the potion was quite difficult.
Though it was the first time for Erica to come here, she already discerned the truth of this world, and started taking appropriate measures.
First of all, she raised the magical power in her body to the maximum limit. Despite the risk of depleting her magical energy, there was no time to hesitate. After dozens of seconds, the body's symptoms disappeared, and Erica stood up, her breathing back to normal. And then came a voice.

"Erica-san, you are amazing. Already moving about in the Ghostly Realm."

Holding the Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi in her hand, Seishuuin Ena walked over.

This Hime-Miko also seemed to be protecting her body in the same way, and did not show any signs of suffering.

"You are really bothersome, I am about to catch up to Godou. Could you not stand in my way?"

"If that's the case, then first defeat Ena by force. Come, we must hurry and fight."

Erica drew Cuore di Leone, having had such intentions from the start.

And then advanced to attack Ena with her Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi in its jet black curved blade form.

The magic sword and the divine blade clashed once again.

At the moment the two blades met, Cuore di Leone was split into two! With split second decisiveness, Erica promptly jumped to the side and evaded the follow up attack.

"Steel of the lion, the symbol of immortal authority!"

Responding to Erica's spell words, the broken segment of the magic sword flew through the air and returned.

And then combined and welded back together again.

With its immortal attribute, Cuore di Leone resurrected, but Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi's power was also increasing.

No, it was simply retrieving its original power?

"Susanoo—letting her body be filled with the divine protection of the blade's original user, that is what allowed her to use a divine artifact that humans cannot use... To think that such a technique existed!"

Erica exclaimed softly.

Ena's body was inhabited by some unknown divine power. This was a tiny portion of Susanoo's divinity—probably around two hundred parts per million—that was being lent to her.

However, though a human body can only accept this small amount, its nature was still the power of a god.

Which is why Ena could freely wield Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi using her own will and sword skills.

"Not just grampsy's power, but this Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi is also similar to a demigod. Its spirit flows within me. Susanoo's attribute as the conquering god, was also obtained from the Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi."

The steel sword that symbolized the conqueror... Since this was bestowed after obtaining the sword, that must be how Susanoo became the conquering god at the same time, deduced Erica.

"You tell me, that grampsy of yours called Susanoo—where is he? Then again, what is he? Could he be a [Heretic God]?"

"According to his own description, he is no longer that young, brash and naughty god."

Ena laughed out loud, and Erica could not help glaring at her. But she was right, if he was a [Heretic God] then he would be wandering on earth and causing mass destruction instead. Then, what kind of existence was he actually?

"Explaining it will take very long... And there's no time left, right?"

Ena felt deeply apologetic.

"Normally, I should be more leisurely, but perhaps due to being in the Ghostly Realm, the divine power in my body has increased? Grampsy and the spirit of Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi are truly amazing, even talking properly is becoming impossible... So Ena would like to apologize to you first."

"You want to apologize?"

"Yes, because Ena is now too strong, so strong that even I feel despicable..."

As she made such a declaration, Ena's body began to shake.

Her movements were very stiff, like those of a puppet, and completely different from her agile moves up to this point.

"Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi, I pledge this body as a sacrifice, pray calm your wild spirit!"

The spell words were chanted from the miko's mouth.

Whispered words that carried piety and nihilism. And inhabiting her pupils was a ferocious fighting spirit and murderous intent.

It was not the eyes of a swordsman who gambled with life to enjoy battle, but those of an evil spirit that swore to defeat all enemies and annihilate them completely.

With her changed expression, Ena raised her jet black divine sword high using stiff movements.

"Thousand leaves breaking, iwaki of god, surpassing possible, I now name it, unfortunate nothingness."^[1]

In the instant the spell song was chanted, Erica received a shocking surprise.

The magical power that protected her and allowed her to adjust to the Ghostly Realm, suddenly left her body.

And then, that magical power was being sucked into Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi!

—The ability to assimilate the power of rebellious barbarians. It turned out it could be used in this way.

Speechless, Erica sank to her knees, her entire body losing strength and her breathing quickened, returning to the same state as when she first arrived in this world.

In front of Ena who was under divine possession, it was truly a dead end situation.

To have the gall to call a god "grampsy" to his face, Ena's courage was beyond imagination.

Godou sighed as he asked:

"I'd like to ask, are you actually a [Heretic God]?"

"No, I'm not rebelling currently, I've tired of that kind of game a long time ago."

"Gods who have escaped the restrictions of their myths, aren't they all [Heretic Gods]?"

Scraps of knowledge that he picked up from Erica before.

But the god who introduced himself as Susanoo simply scoffed in disdain.

"That kind of sloppy categorization is wrong. Normal gods only exist in myths, while only those who escape from legends and walk the earth can be called [Heretic Gods]."

Just by existing on earth, a [Heretic God] would cause severe disasters. This was why the only ones who could oppose them, the campiones, were revered as devil kings. That was what Godou knew.

"As for me, I was a [Heretic God] once."

Susanoo exhaled deeply, and showed an expression as if reading Godou's mind.

"I wandered the earth for over a thousand years, then got bored and decided to live in seclusion. I suppose I used to be very violent and unreasonable, but personalities tend to mellow with age."

Leaving aside this delinquent-like declaration, who could have thought Susanoo was an elderly former [Heretic God]?

This self introduction made Godou stunned with surprise. From a while ago he had been wondering what kind of end existed for gods like Athena, but he never thought a retirement solution like this existed.

"You mentioned living in seclusion, what is that about?"

"Since a [Heretic God] will not die without a serious cause, and consequently will not return to the myths either. Without any other recourse, they can only go to sleep or live secluded in the Ghostly Realm like me."

"Ghostly Realm?"

"Oh? That's this place right here, you didn't know that? I heard you've been summoned here by your adoptive mother Pandora before."

"No, I completely had no idea."

Godou had some kind of subtle feeling as he shook his head.

The headache that appeared after he arrived at this mountain. An annoying headache that suddenly intensified.

"Hahaha, sorry, it's because I brought you here through abnormal means, so you have been unable to retrieve the memories in the Ghostly Realm. You've probably been having a headache all along, right?"

"Then summing up all that was said just now... Everything happened because of you!"

Godou made an indignant accusation, but the elderly hero god laughed "hoho".

"Yes, I used to do many bad things like locking old sis in a cave, so tricks like hiding or concealing are a piece of cake for me."

What did he mean? Godou felt greatly suspicious.

Whenever he tried to ponder about the true visage of Susanoo, his headache would intensify.

Susanoo was originally a god of the earth from Izumo.

However due to repeatedly amalgamating numerous myths, he transformed into a typical hero god. Storms. Using his divine body that controlled storms as a foundation, he obtained the iron sword from slaying the snake.

The iron sword was the Kusanagi sword, the key to him becoming the conquering god of steel.

At the same time, Susanoo also had the hero attribute of craftily making use of deception, and a great example was the story of forcing his elder sister, the great sun goddess Amaterasu, into a stone cave. The legend of 'hiding/stealing the sun', was a common trickster myth in the Asian Pacific region.

All sorts of knowledge about Susanoo flowed into Godou's mind.

And then Godou felt in his right hand, the reaction of the [Sword] being prepared. He fell silent.

"Ha! As expected of the fellow who obtained the sword of wisdom, just by listening to my story, you were able to forge a weapon!"

All he wanted was to know, but why did it turn out like this?

The spell words to slay Susanoo have been obtained, but his head was hurting like it was about to explode. It was probably impossible to win if he had to fight with this god before him in such conditions.

Godou felt doubt at the unexpected occurrence.

He felt that he was exactly like Verethragna—the original user of this sword.

"W-why is this happening..."

"Because this is the Ghostly Realm, which is different from the reality where you live. This is where everything is recorded, from the birth of the universe to all possible future outcomes. Those who possess the ability, can obtain some of these records from this place."

The old god seemed to be undertaking an explanation role.

Godou thought about what he heard before, that the power of spirit vision was the ability to extract [Memories of the Void] from the Boundary of Life and Immortality. So the Ghostly Realm was that kind of territory.

So that was the reason why the environment and the [Warrior]'s power produced some kind of chemical reaction...?

However, his headache was getting worse, and his brain felt like it was burning up.

Very likely it was the price of performing something similar to spirit vision. This kind of task was probably best left to Yuri, Godou painfully realized.

"Anyway, I must leave this place. Something bad is about to happen to my companion—Erica and your miko Seishuuin Ena, and I must go to them."

"What are you talking about? I called you here precisely to stop you from interfering."

Godou endured his headache as he tried to make a sincere request. The former [Heretic God] laughed heartily.

"Just wait a while longer, why the rush? Should I bring out the alcohol?"

This old bastard, why is he making me wait?

As Godou frowned, he heard another voice.

"Looking for your girlfriends? Hahaha, you really are as lecherous as the rumors."

Unlike the steady voice of Susanoo, it was a hoarse sound.

Godou frantically looked in the direction of the voice. In a corner of the little house, another character had started sitting there at some unknown point in time.

Wearing a black robe of a monk, but did not look human at all. His skin was dry and parched, and did not have any real flesh. It was like everything had peeled off.

This was like the body of a living buddha, or a mummified corpse, and it made Godou swallow hard.

"To treasure her to such a degree, looks like our efforts to send you a concubine have not gone to waste. Since Susanoo-san's miko was a peculiar person, I originally worried if she might not suit your tastes... Or perhaps, you worry more about that barbarian little lady?"

The black clad figure spoke in tones that hid subtle sarcasm.

Merely superficially polite, it was clear that he was a very rebellious person.

"Rakshasa King^[2], your majesty would like to see the girls, right? Please wait a moment."

A third voice. This time it was female.

Coming from a direction opposite the dried out monk, Godou shifted his gaze.

An out of this world beauty was sitting in a most proper manner, dressed like a noble princess from the Heian era in a brilliantly colorful juunihitoe^[3] style kimono. However, where did she come from?

Those pupils were crystal clear like the color of glass. Possessing a head of brown hair, her skin was smooth like polished ivory.

And that adorable beauty like a sculpture, surpassed the looks of any modern Japanese.

In front of the princess with pupils of glass was a basin of water.

Filled with water, when did it appear along with the princess—

"W-who are you people?"

Godou frantically asked.

Unlike Susanoo, the mummified monk and the princess did not stimulate his battle spirit, so they shouldn't be gods... At this time, the old hero god said to the unsettled Godou:

"This is the Ghostly Realm, a gathering place for those who are neither human nor gods. Especially gathered right here, are those who are unable to relinquish their feelings for the real world. We have been dealing with the other side for quite a long time, and have been involved in many affairs."

"Simply put, a bunch of old people watching over the young ones."

The dried out monk in black chimed in.

Though most of the teeth in his mouth had already fallen out, his words were surprisingly clear.

"The wizards in charge of this country are too busy with mundane worldly affairs. So in order to prevent them from becoming sleeping tigers, our duty is to remind them from time to time. Sometimes when existences like you pop up, we will also make a few comments."

"...Sleeping tigers?"

As Godou asked, the princess spoke once more.

"Please look this way, Rakshasa King. Your majesty's concubine is here."

Images were appearing in the basin of water before her.

Godou hurried over to look. On the surface of the water appeared the figures of two girls fighting. Erica wielding Cuore di Leone and Seishuuin Ena swinging her blade.

The shape of Ena's sword had changed from a straight to a curved blade, and its color had become black.

Their duel ended dismally.

Facing Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi, Erica had suddenly fallen over.

"Ena that naughty brat, to have come to the Ghostly Realm. Fool, if she performs divine possession in such a place, her body will surely be taken by me and Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi."

"Divine possession?"

Godou questioned Susanoo's scolding of Ena.

"Correct, that is her power as a Hime-Miko. To turn her body into a vessel for storing the divine spirit of a god. But with one mistake, she will lose her mind and body. Looking at her like this... most likely she has been taken over by our divine spirit."

"A miko with that kind of ability is almost like a demigod. It's too unfortunate for the little lady who battled against her."

Susanoo and the monk in black delivered their commentary without any sense of being responsible.

Seeing their attitudes, Godou stood up. It was no longer time for gentle requests.

"Send me there. The faster the better, quick!"

There was no time to tend to the splitting headache.

Godou forced himself to endure the pain, and raised his right arm—the one carrying the [Sword], and pointed at Susanoo.

Making clear that he would show no mercy if refused.

However, despite Godou's threat, Susanoo ignored him and just looked bored while the monk in black mocked him and went 'hoho, how amazing.'

"Hahaha, good good. Those little ladies would be delighted if they heard your words. You have not shamed the name of the [King], I am deeply impressed!"

Hearing such insincere praise, Godou glared at the monk.

Godou gnashed his teeth, but currently he did not have an incarnation to defeat this mummified monk.

"Rakshasa King, if your majesty imagines the place shown here, and make wish to be there, it will be done. In a place like the Ghostly Realm, methods of travel are different from the real world."

The princess with the pupils of glass explained in a humble manner.

Godou could not help gazing at her beauty.

Unsure where this beauty came from, Godou lowered his head.

"Please help those girls with your majesty's mercy, that is my humble wish."

"That goes without saying! Thank you very much, it's been a great help!"

Godou immediately thanked politely.

Strangely enough, it didn't feel like she was lying.

It was as if the campione's supernatural sense of danger informed him... the exact same feeling.

Godou did as she described, and imagined the scenery shown on the water surface. The place where the two girls were, where did such a beautiful river flow in the Ghostly Realm?

In the next instant, Godou vanished from the little house.

Because of that, the young campione did not hear the following conversation.

"That person loves women too much. Just show him the desperate situation of his concubines and he loses all composure like that. Hahaha, looks like it is unlikely he will perform above expectations."

"Yes, it's all Ena that brat's fault for coming here and making him feel there was a crisis."

The dessicated monk could not stop laughing to himself, while Susanoo scolded with displeasure.

"It's time we stop using those girls to test the disposition of the Rakshasa King. I am starting to feel displeased, Enlightened Master, Old Sir."

Admonished by the princess with eyes of glass, the two men continued unfazed.

Erica watched the slowly approaching Seishuuin Ena and the Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi. If this continued, she was going to be slain. With her current frail body, what other measures could she take—

Wracking her brain but failing to find a solution, was it really hopeless?

"Wait, Seishuuin, put your sword away!"

A familiar voice. The figure of the familiar youth showed up between Erica and the Hime-Miko.

Kusanagi Godou. The youth she was determined to save.

"Godou, you're ok...?"

"Well enough, I will handle this. You should rest for a while."

With barely enough strength to ask, she could only watch the back of the youth who answered.

For whose sake did I, Erica Blandelli, come to be caught in this desperate situation? Though she wanted to call him an idiot, Erica gave up because her stamina was at its limits. Substituting her displeasure was a relieved sigh.

'--Godslayer, I cannot follow your orders.'

Ena's lips did not move, and a robotic voice was heard.

Speaking to Godou who stood in front of the weakened Erica, she continued.

'--As the enemy of gods, you are also the enemy of I, the divine sword. To listen to your orders will be my greatest shame.'

"You... are not Seishuuin."

The calm and penetrating voice once again replied.

'Correct, my master and the miko call me Ama no Murakumo, good that you know.'

"Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi! That's Susanoo's weapon, and the Kusanagi sword!"

Godou yelled at the Hime-Miko controlled by the divine blade, the one who looked like Ena but wasn't Ena.

Seeing him surrounded by countless flashes of light, Erica got a big shock. These were the spell words of the [Sword]!

"Susanoo is a god with a long history with [Steel]! His territory Susa is well-known for producing iron ore, and he is also the god of storms. In ancient times, strong wind provided the greatest assistance to forging iron by fanning the flames to make them stronger, and that intense fire can melt iron!"

The brilliant light of the [Sword] started moving like a stream of meteors, and flew to attack Ena.

Targeted, she silently kicked at the ground, and began running like the wind at superhuman levels, intending to escape the onslaught of the [Sword].

However, it still caught up to her.

Wielding the divine sword with movements like a puppet, she tried to deflect the [Sword] in vain. Steel that should have cut through the spheres of light, was pushed back by the light instead.

Erica was certain, these were the spell words that can defeat Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi.

'...Spell words that can conquer a god and his belongings. True to the status of a godslayer, a most troublesome weapon indeed.'

It was still that robotic voice.

Ena admitted her disadvantage. Ena—no, Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi controlled the Hime-Miko to jump backwards.

Such a jump would probably require a human-sized cricket or grasshopper, to instantly create a distance of dozens of metres.

'--Continuing to stay in the Ghostly Realm will cause damage to my miko's body. It would be wise to repeat this duel another time. Godslayer, I will return to the real world, and wait for you there.'

Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi manipulated Ena's body and buried her into the ground.

Darkness consumed the ground beneath her legs, and spread out into a great patch of jet blackness.

This was probably the [Door] that pulled the two of them into the Ghostly Realm. As the surprised Erica watched Ena and the divine blade devoured by the darkness, they disappeared.

"How could that girl do such a thing...?"

"The current Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi is just like a cheap copy of Susanoo. With that smelly old bastard's power, of course it's possible, and because of that, the [Sword] was effective against her."

Godou explained as he massaged his temples.

He was struck with intense pain once again, and the worried Erica hurried over before him.

"Godou, how are you?"

"Perhaps I forced myself too much to create the [Sword] to defeat Susanoo, it gives me a great headache to use it. I fear I cannot continue..."

It could be seen that a lot had happened to Godou, and he was reaching his limits.

Erica deeply sighed. Though she was concerned about Ena who had escaped back to earth, but their biggest problem right now was being stranded in the Astral Realm. Was there a way for them to leave...?

When she received Amakasu's phonecall, it was around six in the evening.

"Ena-san disappeared? So has Godou-san and Erica-san?"

Receiving such news at the Nanao Shrine, Mariya Yuri was greatly surprised.

'That's right, we have been placing Ena-san under surveillance, actually.'

Hearing this unsettling news, Yuri frowned. The Committee must have some reason for doing that.

'On the weekend, Ena-san had visited your school and then suddenly ran into Erica-san and Kusanagi-san, and the three of them vanished together... What an unbelievable development.'

Amakasu described everything in detailed order.

From his tone of voice, it could be surmised that he was admitting to being the one in charge of the surveillance mission. After all, to be following the highly alert number one ranking Hime-Miko, most likely could only be undertaken by a master of the arts of concealment like Amakasu.

"There was an inside story after all."

'It's the elders, there can be no other. What are they planning?'

The elders who even the History Compilation Committee members have to please.

They were inhuman supernatural existences. Fairies, demigods, holy monks, ascended ascetics, great magi, vengeful spirits... With all sorts of different legends, they were a group that surpassed humanity and approached immortality. It was said that they had freed themselves from the natural order of reality, and chose to live in the Ghostly Realm.

Yuri recalled the Old One who watched over Ena, the frightening god who was once known as a [Heretic God].

The ancient deity who possessed the Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi.

Kidnapping a Campione, was something that no one but the elders could do.

However, Yuri could not understand why they were acting so rashly.

This was not going to work. If she did not make an attempt, she would not be able to improve her powers of deduction. She wanted intelligence and wisdom rivalling Erica, and initiative that did not require being led by Ena.

Yuri made a determined decision as she requested.

"I will now go to school and see if I can discern where Godou-san and the rest have gone."

'Actually I was going to ask you to do that, much appreciated. My apologies.'

The Committee's top investigator seemed a bit happy.

But then he seemed troubled by the condition Yuri proposed next.

'Hmm, I don't think it's a good idea, it's too early for that.'

"No, I believe it is a necessary measure, Amakasu-san. Though it pains me to put it this way, but please regard it as the price and condition for my cooperation."

The "Hime" part of the term Hime-Miko, was not simply just for show.

For a Hime-Miko, it was true that the History Compilation Committee was a higher ranking organization. However, the reverence and respect for the bloodline of the Hime-Miko was a tradition passed along over a thousand years.

Amakasu and the members of the Committee, did not have the authority to give a Hime-Miko orders on whim.

Yuri decided to take advantage of her status for the first time.

After about an hour, three people gathered on the sports ground of Jounan Academy.

Mariya Yuri, Amakasu Touma, and Liliana Kranjcar.

Though the sky was darkening, the sun had yet to set entirely, which is to say, it was dusk.

In this ambiguous dimly lit conditions, the silver-haired knight glared at Amakasu Touma.

"I heard that Kusanagi Godou was kidnapped by the one backing Seishuuin Ena."

"Please don't be mad, this time we are also victims... That is why I suggested not to bring her along."

Yuri shook her head at the complaining History Compilation Committee member.

"The magic and knowledge that Liliana-san possesses, will definitely come in handy in this situation. Besides, other than her, there is no one else with a witch's powers..."

She was one who was outstanding in witchcraft.

Actually, this was also Liliana Kranjcar's most valuable disposition.

In terms of martial ability she was equal to Erica, while Yuri was vastly superior in spirit vision.

However, witchcraft was something that no one else could use except for Liliana.

To understand the thoughts of birds and beasts and be able to command them, to fly like a bird in the sky, to swim freely like a fish in water, to gather herbs from the forest to make potions, these all fell under the areas of strength of witches.

"Since Yuri-san insists, I will not oppose, and please participate together, Liliana-san... So, let's start immediately?"

Prompted by Amakasu, Yuri surveyed the 'crime scene' once again.

Godou, Erica and Ena disappeared from a corner of the school, and in front of her was a wall of the school building.

—Shivering, she felt even her back shaking.

Terrifying magical traces were discovered.

Liliana also seemed to have felt it, and she narrowed her eyes, focusing on the school wall.

"Mariya Yuri, can you see the problem here? Regrettably, a great power was applied here, and I cannot gather any clues..."

Liliana spoke with great dismay, and Yuri closed her eyes.

Not sight, but [Vision] that gathered spiritual disposition that surpassed the five senses, at this instant the vision appeared.

—The sun dominating the sky became completely dark, it was like a solar eclipse.

—Holding the great sword of steel the storm god appeared, causing the land with the bountiful harvest to wither into a gray wilderness.

"It was Susanoo after all..."

After the Marquis Voban incident, it had been a while since she experienced a vision.

From the images shown before her eyes, Yuri seemed to have found out what happened.

"I know the method used to take Godou-san and the rest away, and also saw where they went."

Yuri explained as she endured her overexhausted body.

Liliana displayed great interest, but Amakasu looked tired for some reason.

"Perhaps you already have an idea, Amakasu-san?"

"Amongst the ones able to kidnap a Campione, I already have a very good idea. Requesting your spirit vision was just to obtain concrete proof. Since this is an internal affair, I still hope the outsider can be dismissed."

"No, starting from now, is when we truly need Liliana-san's wisdom."

Yuri casted an apologetic gaze at Amakasu.

And then she turned towards and bowed her head at Liliana who had been excluded from the conversation and was showing signs of displeasure.

"I beg you, please tell me the method to save Godou-san, Erica-san and Ena from the Ghostly Realm—the Boundary of Life and Immortality."

After listening to the gist of the situation, the witch and Great Knight showed a troubled expression.

"A deity who used to be a [Heretic God]? This country is harboring such a monster!"

"If possible, I also wish he would hurry up and pass on, but that's not going to happen. He's been hanging around for over a thousand years. To be honest, we are also very troubled too."

"Amakasu-san, your description is a bit..."

Yuri scolded Amakasu for his imprudent comment as she waited for the witch's response.

Since they now know that Godou and the rest were trapped in the Ghostly Realm, then they must go over to bring them back. Now the only one capable of using that kind of spell, was the silver-haired witch.

"In order to transfer to the Astral Realm, the magical ritual and the required medication are needed. I already know the ritual, but the problem is the potion..."

Liliana's expression darkened as she continued to speak.

"I know the recipe, but I don't have the ingredients. There are a few essential precious herbs, but don't have them on hand and must send for them from back home."

"Then what if we go buy them right now? I've heard that shops selling those kinds of things exist in Tokyo."

Yuri had heard from Amakasu and others at the History Compilation Committee.

They would occasionally place under surveillance those shops that secretly sold wizardry tools and media.

However, Liliana showed an 'oh no' kind of stiff expression.

"Actually... I have no idea where those shops are located."

"Eh?"

"Because... I have been busy taking care of Kusanagi Godou, so I have not spent the time to familiarize myself with people and places in that field in Tokyo..."

Liliana bowed her head, and confessed, embarrassed.

Her fingers twiddling, the blush on her face was especially cute. It was completely different from Liliana's usual awe-inspiring appearance. Then Yuri suddenly thought of the adage 'putting the cart before the horse.'

"No, no, just ask Amakasu-san to lead the way."

Trying to find a safe solution, but unfortunately reality was cruel.

"Uh, no can do, I'm afraid. Any ingredient or media required by high level magic, above rank E in difficulty, has to be ordered in advance. Using

online shopping parlance, it's under the category of 'delivery time unknown.' Even if we rushed over right away, we won't get it."

"T-then they must have logistics problems!"

"Actually what I think is that it is more strange for the Kranjcar family to keep those items around the house!"

Liliana felt furious at Amakasu's tactless honesty.

There was no time to wait for a delivery from Italy. In that time span, things could have gone from bad to worse.

Just as Yuri was about to consider other options.

A suspicious presence could be felt... from Amakasu's body.

She had once read a mystery novel that someone recommended to her as guaranteed to be interesting.

Towards a character that appeared around the tenth page or so, she had the exact same feeling of suspicion. As she paid attention to that character and continued reading, it turned out the person was the final culprit.

Henceforth, Yuri tried to avoid that genre. Very calmly, she said:

"Amakasu-san, what are you trying to hide?"

"Uh... I don't know what you're talking about. Could it be your imagination?"

The History Compilation Committee special operative, was subtly diverting his gaze.

But Yuri was not deterred, and continued to ask, determined to speak her mind.

"Since the name Sayanomiya suddenly appeared in my mind, could it be... that family is involved?"

"Sayanomiya? What is that?"

"The History Compilation Committee is an organization run under the direction of the Sayanomiya family. They are steep in the traditions of wizardry, and several generations ago, their family head had gone to study in Europe and learned knowledge about magic over there--"

As she explained to Liliana who interrupted with a question, Yuri recalled a certain incident.

During the Marquis Voban incident, at the time when she visited the secret library at Aobadai.

That was the facility that stored the grimoires collected and confiscated by special operatives like Amakasu from all over Japan. Come to think of it, the Committee surely must collect more than books.

"Perhaps, amongst the various items Amakasu-san and your colleagues confiscate, there are the items that Liliana called ingredients? Those things are probably kept in the Sayanomiya residence..."

"Hahaha, how can that be possible, please don't guess randomly."

"Whether or not it is a random guess, everything will be cleared up by an investigation."

Liliana drew her beloved sword in front of Amakasu who was playing dumb.

The magic sword II Maestro, was personally forged by the top swordsmiths and magi.

"I will go directly into that residence and search. If it is not there, then I will search all the facilities belonging to your Committee."

Discerning Yuri's thoughts from the dialogue just now, Liliana declared with great awe-inspiring impact.

Although from an ethical standpoint, this kind of behavior was not very appropriate. However, she still made her declaration openly.

Yuri was very impressed. Threats should be made in such a manner? A lesson learnt.

"Sigh... As expected, calling her here was trouble. Fine, I confess, I know how the required ingredients can be obtained. The Sayanomiya residence does have these things, but due to various reasons, they cannot be arbitrarily moved, so it would be best not to go there."

Amakasu finally spoke the truth amidst sighing tones.

Knowing she can go save her dear friends, Yuri could not help feeling excited in her heart.

Ghostly Realm, Astral Realm, Boundary of Life and Immortality.

In this space with many different names, Godou was caught in a dilemma.

Ena, under Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi's control, had escaped a while ago. Though from his body's sensations it felt like an hour has passed, Godou knew such feelings were unreliable because the flow of time in this place was unlikely to be the same as on earth. After some rest, Godou's headache had also recovered almost completely. However—

On the other hand, Erica's condition was worsening.

Her face in pain, breathing irregularly, sweating profusely. Trying to touch her, Godou felt that her body was exceptionally hot, as if having a high fever. She also had no strength left, and could not even turn her body over.

Completely drained, she was lying in the shade of a tree beside the river.

"Given the current situation, I guess the only way is to return to the mountain just now..."

Godou muttered to himself. Since he did not have the knowledge or skills to help Erica, he must ask for help. And in this mysterious space he only knew three 'people,' if they could be called that. Susanoo and the mummified monk aside, perhaps the benevolent princess might extend a helping hand.

"May I ask, how is this world structured?"

Worrying about Erica's condition, Godou asked.

In order to save her and leave, he needed information.

There was a beautiful river here that flowed somewhere.

As well as a seemingly limitless plain.

This scenery extended to the horizon without any change.

The little house in the mountain where Susanoo was located seemed to be in one direction, or perhaps not. To have suddenly jumped out here in an instant, even Godou could not believe his eyes.

"...Susanoo's location is a different space from here. If I'm not mistaken, the Astral Realm is composed of many disconnected worlds and spaces. You must have performed a spatial transfer between them..."

Erica quoted from what she had read in books and explained to Godou.

Without her usual flair when speaking, it seemed like her stamina had been draining continuously, and Godou nodded to her, frantic for a solution to the situation.

"In other words, this is very similar to an apartment building, oh? Though you live under the same roof, homes are separated by walls and floors, but you can still move about using corridors and stairs."

A broad world that contained countless independent spaces and linked together like a spider's web.

Even for the storm god Susanoo, no matter how much he summons violent storms, the only affected area is the [Room] he is occupying.

Which explains why [Heretic Gods], whose existence alone brings disaster to the world, can live secluded in this realm.

"...But you've already used the [Warrior] form just now so the [Sword] can no longer be used for a while. If we are going to Susanoo's place, shouldn't you wait a while first?"

"No, if this continues, your body will not last."

Verethragna's ten incarnations.

The authority that Godou usurped from the ancient Persian Warlord, had many restrictions.

After being used, an incarnation could only be used again after one day.

The [Sword] had already been activated when he met the old god. Godou must avoid as much as possible from entering a direct confrontation against Susanoo without a trump card. However, Godou shook his head at Erica's suggestion.

"I will find a way. Even though there's a few distasteful fellows there, someone nice is also there."

Godou quietly picked up Erica in his arms and laid her on his back.

Attempting the method just now, his mind imagined the little house in the mountain and the surrounding beautiful scenery, and then wished to go there.

—And then, Godou and Erica were suddenly transferred to a beach.

Before their eyes was a beautiful deep blue sea, and waves quietly broke against them.

"H-how could this happen!"

"Looks like your imagination is lacking... Though Godou is a Campione, but you have never received special training... Perhaps without a certain level of magical competence, the transfer will not succeed..."

"But I just went to where you were without any issues!"

"...That was surely because you could see the scenery... A scene before your eyes compared to one recalled purely from memory, there is a huge difference in difficulty."

Erica explained from his back.

However, she spoke slowly and paused many times. Godou began to enter a state of panic. If this continued, her life will be threatened, the next attempt must succeed!

Once again he secured the scenery in his mind. It is a mountain. He must reach Susanoo's mountain this time.

But where Godou and Erica arrived at, was a totally bare and barren mountain.

Brown rocks, dry wind, blue sky. It would not be surprising to find eagles and vultures circling in the air. It was a completely opposite scene from the lush green mountain.

"Damn it, one more time!"

The third attempt at imagination and third transfer, but this was not even a natural habitat.

It was a white space and they were surrounded by white.

A space where the whiteness extended from one horizon to another.

Ticktock, ticktock. There was also a strange sound, the sound of clocks running.

Carrying Erica on his back, Godou looked around him.

Very soon, an ancient clock appeared in his sight, but then the clock ticking was also heard from behind him. Turning around, he found a silver pocket watch. As the left side sounded as well, a massive clock tower could be seen in that direction...

As soon as the clock ticking was heard, a new clock would appear. This repeated dozens of times.

"Godou... this isn't working, you are completely lost..."

Erica protested in a barely audible voice.

Godou let out a huge sigh. Looks like he is running into dead ends. One more time, try again, a steady image. This time must transfer to the place in his heart.

"...Not working after all..."

Hearing Erica's tired voice, Godou was speechless.

The two of them had arrived at a stone paved street.

A simple gothic street, one could have mistaken it for the Italian countryside.

Little houses linked by the eaves of their roofs, roads and squares paved with brick. If this was located on earth, the scenery here would most likely be classified as a world heritage site.

But there was not a single soul here. Looking around no other person was spotted. It was an empty street.

Lying on his back, Erica's breathing began to quicken.

Her breathing interspersed by brief intervals, it looked like the multiple transfers have taken their toll on her body.

Finding a little park nearby, Godou laid Erica onto the grass and sat down beside her. He felt so bad about things that he would have kicked a trashcan had there been one.

"Damn, I am out of ideas. If this continues, then this really is the end."

"By the way... Godou, I have a request."

Godou jumped in surprise. Erica was speaking in rare innocent tones.

The only time she used this voice was basically in the mornings when she just woke up. Currently she was in an even more vulnerable state.

"I feel like death is near, could you give me a final passionate kiss or embrace...?"

"Y-you stop saying such foolish words! Don't say something so unlucky!"

Whether the first or the latter half of the statement, neither was tolerable, and Godou immediately scolded her.

But Erica shook her head lightly.

"The chances of this future is very high... I am already unable to heal this body with my own power, and have no method to leave the Astral Realm. Furthermore, I have no way to reach a third party who can save us out of here... This is the end."

Godou swallowed words of denial.

The reason why they couldn't return to Susanoo's place was because of his own stupidity.

"So, let's start preparing for the future. If I am no longer here, you must follow my instructions..."

"Come on, stop playing this joke like leaving final words!"

"I am not joking, wasn't you the one who just said this was the end?"

His words picked apart, Godou fell silent.

Just as she said, he understood very well, if they can't return to where Susanoo was, he was powerless. Even if Erica didn't spell it out, he knew.

"T-then I will ask one more time, kiss me, embrace me tightly... If possible, treat this as a continuation of that time in Sicily, no? You still can't decide?"

She asked with the tone of a prankster.

Erica placed her hand over Godou's hand, but did not use the usual unnatural strength. She already had no more spare strength or magic to increase her arm strength.

However, her sincere expression was adorable to a heartbreakingly degree.

"At least tell me, how do you really feel about me... Do not dodge the issue like usual, you have to be clear...?"

How he felt about Erica? Wasn't this already obvious!

Perhaps death really was near as she said. But Godou did not want to admit it. How could he let something like that happen. Still, Godou's rationality told him it was true.

Godou's heart was invaded by fury and anxiety, as well as terror at the thought of losing her.

Godou tightly held Erica's hand.

Then he drew his face near, his lips slowly approaching her thin yet seductive lips. Then pressed upon them—

Kissing each other.

They repeated this motion for quite a while.

"Godou... This is your first time kissing me on your own initiative."

Tens of seconds later, their lips separated and Erica spoke softly.

Despite the crisis they were trapped in, her face was filled with satisfaction and happiness.

Seeing her expression, Godou's heart was greatly shaken.

The feelings of tender affection for her, the fear of losing her, the anxiety for finding a solution, agitation and anger, Godou was trapped in an onslaught of all sorts of feelings.

But then the most intense emotion was anger.

Anger at the circumstances taking her away from him, and anger at his own impotence.

"Ah... it hurts. Godou, please be a bit softer..."

Unwittingly he had held her even tighter, causing Erica to plead.

Instead Godou held Erica's weak and slender hand, not lightly but gripping harder. Erica accepted this action without any rejection.

Instead she happily closed her eyes, and smiled as she leaned closer to Godou and pressed her body weight upon him.

At that moment, this girl entrusted her heart and body entirely to Godou.

Understanding that, Godou's anger in his heart reached new heights. He let go of Erica's hand and stood up to glare at the sky. Perhaps far away on the other side the gods existed, but created this tragic fate as if playing with mankind.

Glaring at those supernatural existences, his anger continued to burn.

Crying because someone precious will be leaving him forever? Impossible. Mourning this for some time, then using the rest of his existence to live life fully and sing praises of love? Impossible. Living a life of regret and anger with despair and a broken heart because his lover passed away?

Completely rubbish!

These were not actions fit for a [King]. A god-slaying Devil King was not going to act this way.

Most importantly, he himself could not accept living in such a manner!

Godou's savage eyes gave off light. Previously this appeared only when his heart was fired up and he smiled with the joy of battle during his struggles against gods or other Campiones, but he didn't have that kind of mood this time.

No matter what comes along, be it god or buddha, he will slay them all!

If fate was unacceptable, he will use his will and authority to crush fate beneath his feet.

If he can't even do something like that, then how can he call himself the Devil King? Who dares to take Erica away? Whose woman do you think you are taking!

"...Godou? What is going on with you? Why is your expression so horrible. Why are you different from usual?"

Erica beside him was feeling intimidated and questioned.

However he ignored her. Comforting and showering this girl with affection was something to be done later.

What needed to be done now, was to intercept unreasonable fate and everything else trying to take her life! Where to go? Who needs to be beaten?

Where is the opponent I need to defeat? I will absolutely not let him out of my grasp—!!

In that instant, he was struck with pain.

His brain suddenly felt like it was burning, and he felt intense pain.

This was the same pain that came when he obtained knowledge of Susanoo, the burden brought by spirit vision.

Why was it appearing at this time? The previous time was because of using the [Warrior]—activating Verethragna's incarnation, and injecting knowledge of the god into the [Sword], right?

But at this time there shouldn't be an incarnation that he could make use of. No...

Or perhaps there actually existed an incarnation that could save Erica and protect her?

The instant he thought that, the change appeared.

He saw it. Replacing his headache was spirit vision which showed him how to use the new power.

The feeling he felt when fighting Voban resurfaced, an incomparable sense of omnipotence that filled his body and mind, now I hold everything in my hands. And have obtained everything!

"Erica... I absolutely will never let you go, so please swear to me."

Having mastered Verethragna's fifth incarnation, Godou spoke the spell words.

"Hurry up and swear! Stay by my side no matter what... Even if life is coming to an end, even if the world itself is coming to an end, even if it means battling all the gods, stay by my side forever."

This was not ordinary speech but holy words infused with power usurped from the gods.

At the same time, this was an arrogant king's holy decree that demanded an everlasting oath.

Gazing at his majestic splendor, beside him Erica's beautiful expression turned joyous and trance-like.

"Could you have awakened that incarnation? You finally mastered the entirety of Verethragna!?"

"Quit the useless words. Do you want to make an oath? Now hurry and decide!"

"Of course I swear! Until the day the world is destroyed, I will always stay by your side, giving everything I've got!"

Erica immediately yelled in response to the stern scolding.

Accompanied by the most beautiful and most obedient smile from the bottom of her heart that she had ever shown.

Hearing her oath, Godou nodded deeply.

The fifteen-year-old youth who shone with light.

This was the appearance chosen by the war god they met on Sardinia.

As the hero and the saint, Verethragna's fifth incarnation that leads the people and watches over them.

Mastering this power, Godou definitely could protect this girl. Thus Erica must now obtain the mark of the protector, Godou, and receive his protection and blessing.

Godou pushed Erica's slender body down upon the grass.

Though it was done roughly, neither of them minded. The two of them were now the king and the protected, the dominator and the dominated.

Godou laid himself over the girl's body, and once again took her lips.

"—Mmm, mmm~~"

He greedily savored the lips of the panting Erica.

It would have been more appropriate if he showed concern for her weak body and treated her gently instead—

However it was too late to stop, Godou advanced without resistance, his lips pressed upon Erica's, his tongue licking her thin lips and then reaching deep into her mouth.

His tongue probed for Erica's tongue, finding it and entangling together. She also responded and yielded to his entangling, and the two of them tangled together without pause.

...The sound of mucous membranes harmoniously engaged in exchange could be heard.

Pressed under Godou's weight, Erica's body breathed heavily. Though her build was very delicate, her body was extremely voluptuous in all the right places.

Warm and full of elasticity, her body gave an incredible tactile feeling, and felt hotter than anything.

The pleasure of intimate contact with her, as well as the feeling of intoxication produced by an uncountable repetition of kisses.

The intense heavy breathing of both sides gave Erica an intense feeling of being alive.

Seeing Erica's state of disarray, hearing her delicate breathing, smelling her fragrance, tasting the flavor of her tongue and saliva, feeling Erica's warm skin—

The five senses, the mind and the entire body were overcome with pleasure as if drowned in honey.

However, Godou's intention was not to seek such intoxication.

"Erica, starting now I will transmit Verethragna—my power to you. You will likely suffer, but you must endure. Can you do it? Will you bear it?"

"Yes, I know, I will definitely endure... Please, Godou."



Despite her weak state she struggled to nod and affirm her oath, and Godou kissed her lips once again.

Lips and tongue, saliva and teeth, Godou left nothing untouched.

As he did so, Godou felt as if a channel opened up between Erica and him.

An invisible wizardry channel through which the strongest [Protection] could be transmitted from one to the other.

Godou's consciousness transmitted to his lower abdomen.

It was the area termed by Chinese medicine as the dantian^[4], or "elixir field", in other words, the deepest part of the body.

From there he began to raise his magical power, and in the process distilled pure magical power into [Protection].

From the lower abdomen to the abdomen, then to the chest, and finally through the throat and transmitted to the mouth.

Magical power which rose up as if following the backbone, was poured into Erica's mouth through the lips.

What converted this power into [Protection] was his feelings for her—the wish to protect her and the hope to grant her power. Kusanagi Godou prayed so in his heart.

"Godou... I can feel what you are giving to me."

Fascinated, Erica murmured with her eyes closed.

Speaking as they kissed, each vibration of the lips, soft and sweet, everything could be experienced.

However this was just the opening, and the climax has yet to be reached.

In order to hasten the pouring of distilled [Protection] into her body, Godou increased the flow rate.

"—!?"

Erica briefly moaned in discomfort.

Letting go of her lips for an instant, tears could be seen in the corner of her eyes as she gasped for breath.

"Erica, if you cannot bear it..."

"No, it's fine. Continue, it was the sudden increase in speed that gave me a fright. This time I will endure, hurry up with the next step...?"

She was clearly putting up a front. However Godou pretended not to notice.

Erica Blandelli's affections and body were all Godou's possessions. Forcing actions of pain and tolerance upon this girl was his exclusive right and privilege.

He will not permit anyone else to cause any pain and suffering to Erica.

Now in direct proportion to the pain she received was the strongest [Protection].

Godou looked at her once again, and Erica returned with a passionate gaze. The two of them nodded in assent, and began another deep kiss...

"Mmmm—! No problem, continue..!"

Erica painfully tensed her body.

Godou embraced her body tightly as support, his hand holding her's in encouragement, and Erica gripped his hand in return. From the strength of her grip, one could imagine the level of pain she was feeling.

Godou was no longer able to attend to her, and could only continue the outpour of Verethragna's [Protection] in one breath.

"Ah, aaaaaaaaaah!"

Erica cried out, but Godou did not stop. He could not hesitate.

Finally, the [Protection] reached the deepest part of her body, the important "elixir field" in the lower abdomen.

"—!"

Erica's cries became hoarse and unrecognizable.

As she tightly gripped Godou's hand, her other hand that was embracing him had left deep and bloody scratches along Godou's back. While enduring the pain, Godou continued to press his lips upon Erica's.

She should be in much greater pain than me, so this is nothing.

The holy war god's protection.

The seal of the victor bestowed by the glorious hero.

The pulse of magical energy delivered by Godou, has temporarily strengthened Erica's body and mind.

A Campione had the tenacity to adapt to the environment of the Astral Realm in short time, the boundless life force to heal immediately from any damage within a certain level, and the battle instincts to enter their strongest condition during battle. All these qualities were now infused into Erica's body.

Erica's body went limp.

Her entire body drenched with sweat, but no signs of pain could be seen on her beautiful face any more.

She tightly held Godou's hand and smiled quietly.

Her smile carried a sliver of fatigue, but it was a very agreeable sense of tiredness.

Godou separated from her, though he felt a slight reluctance to leave Erica's burning hot and lithe body. However, if this posture continued it could get problematic...

Erica also got up immediately.

Her face full of smiles, she pounced upon the unwary Godou. Her weight felt rather comfortable.

However, Godou's rationality told him, this cannot continue.

"W-wait a minute! The ritual's over, and Verethragna's protection is already within your body, so it doesn't need to continue..."

"Of course I am aware of that. This is my return gift to Godou's love. Accept it obediently."

This time it was Godou's turn to be pushed down by Erica.

Looks like once she recovered, she immediately reversed their top-down positions.

"I-It wasn't love, more like friendship and concern—"

"No, it's love, I understand."

Her lips drawing near, it's been quite a while since he experienced a kiss initiated by Erica.

In order to escape the situation, Godou was going to resist with force, but before he finished his thought he gave up... For some unknown reason, he suddenly lost that compulsion. Might as well continue with this position for now.

Eventually letting go of his lips, Erica showed a smile that said 'pass.'

Translator's Notes and References

1. ↑ **Man'youshuu**: the "Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves"(万葉集) is the oldest existing collection of Japanese poetry. Ena's incantation here comes from poem #2663 in the Man'youshuu.
2. ↑ **Rakshasa**: a race of mythological humanoid beings or unrighteous spirits in Hinduism and Buddhism, also called man-eaters.
3. ↑ **juunihitoe**: literally "twelve-layer robe"(十二單衣), the juunihitoe is an extremely elegant and highly complex kimono that was worn only by court-ladies in Japan.
4. ↑ **dantian**: (丹田) located below the navel (about three finger widths down and two finger widths deep), it is associated with cultivating life energy (qi) and vital essence.

Chapter 7 - Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi

Banchou Sarayashiki. This was the place of origin of the legend about the ghost that counted plates as it muttered to itself "one is missing."

In the special Tokyo ward of Chiyoda, the area of Banchou has been a very high class residential street where high ranking warriors^[1] and lords^[2] lived since the Edo period.

The home of the Sayanomiya family in Sanbanchou was quite close to the Tokyo Imperial Palace.

Hidden in a very inconspicuous location on the roadside amongst many offices and luxury apartments, the Sayanomiya residence was a western style mansion built in the Taisho era.

From its physical location the value of the house should have been quite high, however it did not give people a good impression.

Not only was it severely old and decrepit, it was dark like a haunted house and felt like there were ghosts and monsters.

Driven here by Amakasu, Yuri began to feel a sense of uneasiness.

As if something ominous lurked there—a most unpleasant presence. By the way, this was her first visit to the Sayanomiya residence.

"I've already made contact, so let's go. Please walk over here."

Before them, Amakasu pointed to the entrance. Yuri and Liliana followed his direction.

The walk through the front yard from the car-park to the door took two minutes.

"The house is smaller than expected... As the leader of the family that commands the History Compilation Committee, is this not too cramped?"

Liliana surveyed the house.

"Considering the land prices of this neighborhood, this house is a bargain. Actually there's a bigger house at Setagaya. This is just a secondary residence and the current owner Kaoru-san is the next family head."

With a great sense of familiarity, Amakasu opened the front door.

The one who came to greet them was a young man wearing a proper butler uniform.

This man who displayed the highly trained skills of a hotel attendant, whispered with Amakasu and then Amakasu walked inside.

Yuri and Liliana followed behind him and reached a room that seemed to be the study.

"Kyoko, how is it going? Suddenly calling here. Tomorrow? Sorry, something is scheduled already. Hahaha, how can that be possible, not a date of course. Don't have strange suspicions."

It was the pleasant voice Yuri heard before.

In the study, Sayanomiya had just hung up her cellphone.

Noticing Amakasu and Yuri as well as Liliana, Kaoru was just about to greet them when the cellphone rang again. Glancing at the LCD call display, she said 'sorry' and picked up the call.

"It's been a while, Haremi. Yes, I am fine too. Sorry, I have some things to discuss right now, may I hang up? Oh... I remember next week's promise very well, then goodbye."

Finishing the call with simplicity, Kaoru hung up, but then it rang again.

"Who is it this time... Kiyoko?"

"No, it's Ayano, but I'll pick it up later since everyone has gathered."

Watching the next Sayanomiya family head shrug her shoulders, Amakasu nagged in earnest.

"Kaoru-san, what are you planning if you don't reveal your gender to all these girls who have fallen for you? To be tricked and completely in the dark, aren't they pitiful?"

"But even if I told them the truth, there are many girls who would go 'it does not matter', I was very surprised."

In a different way, this Hime-Miko was a troublesome character no less than Ena.

Numerous girls admired Kaoru and fell head over heels in love. However, she seemed to enjoy this, and actively socialized with them.

"Let me introduce for Liliana-san. This is Sayanomiya Kaoru-san. The Tokyo Branch Chief of the History Compilation Committee and next Sayanomiya family head, plus a member of the Hime-Miko's."

"...Did you say Hime-Miko?"

Liliana stared in surprise.

She must have been greatly shocked. Kaoru was wearing a white shirt and tie with men's dress pants. Though very pretty, it was an image too far removed from that of a delicate young girl.

With an elegant smile and refined airs, Kaoru greeted the guest from Europe.

"A pleasure to meet you, Liliana Kranjcar-san. Despite my appearances, I am still Yuri and Ena's colleague, though I've heard countless times that it is impossible to imagine me wearing a miko's outfit."

Kaoru made a gesture towards the sofa couch, and Liliana and Yuri took a seat.

As they sat down, Kaoru took a seat opposite them while Amakasu stood ready behind her.

"I have already heard Yuri and Liliana's request on the phone just now. Let's start with the conclusion. If you agree to our conditions, then assisting you is not a problem."

"Is this ok, Kaoru-san? The previous previous generation will have objections."

"Though they will be troublesome, but as long as equivalent value is exchanged, I will not be stingy. Of course, it still depends on the terms of the agreement."

As the master and subordinate conversed, Liliana interrupted.

"Do not forget we still have the option of seizing by force."

"That's not good, you've met Ena right? Amongst those involved with the Committee, there exist talents who rival the martial and magical abilities of the Great Knights. My honest advice is please do not act recklessly."

Liliana scoffed in disdain but backed down from her declaration.

Regardless of the outcome of starting a fight here, if she were to be pursued by several elites she had little chance of winning. Liliana understood very well that as long as it was within this country, the other side had the home field advantage.

"Even if I am attacked here, Amakasu-san will take the knife for me, right?"

"Sorry but I must refuse, please do not expect loyalty that exceeds my salary."

"Uh... fine whatever."

Kaoru coughed at Amakasu's response that left her hanging in embarrassment.

"Liliana-san and Yuri, let's get to the main point."

Yuri prepared herself, she was very clear that the cross-dressing miko before her eyes was extremely crafty. Even Ena who always did things her own way described Kaoru as "very troublesome!" If possible, it would be best to minimize contact with her.

"Yes, let me give an example, if our condition for providing the ingredients is to request that Liliana-san return to her country... Is this acceptable?"

"I will never accept such a condition!"

Liliana angrily refused while Kaoru laughed "hoho."

A very likable and open smile. This was one of her weapons.

"Ah, if the number of Europeans around Kusanagi increased, it won't be good for him. Like this time, it was Ena's excuse for getting involved. Putting the Copper Black Cross aside, but I hope you, Liliana-san of the Bronze Black Cross, can exercise some self discipline."

"Why is it fine for Erica but not me?"

"Yes—perhaps if I put it this way, you will be angry... Because you are a girl who doesn't know adult ways of communication."

Kaoru spoke with profound meaning in her words.

Though she looked like a young man, and had the beauty of a girl, there was a mysterious sense of sadness.

"If I were to negotiate with Erica, I'm sure it will be a very interesting discussion, and a deal will be reached. But after hearing about your exploits since arriving in Japan, I don't think you are that kind of person, Liliana Kranjcar."

Striking directly at the other party's vulnerabilities and instigating a battle of words. Kaoru was getting serious.

"These past three months, we have acquiesced to Erica-san's existence because she has accepted us—in particularly accepted coexistence with Yuri who was sent by us. Take the trip to Sardinia for example, if Erica-san wished, she could have left Yuri alone in Japan."

Now that it's mentioned, Godou and Yuri (plus the History Compilation Committee)'s movements were completely under her grasp.

Yuri thought about the summer holiday. The way that Erica said 'I want to let you and Godou deepen your friendship' as she expressed her acceptance of Yuri with her attitude and actions.

"However, Liliana-san is not like that... Once you came to Japan, you have been stuck to Kusanagi-san like glue and treated our Yuri and Erica-san with hostility. You have given us sufficient cause to eliminate you."

"Eliminating hazards to the master is part of a knight's duty!"

Liliana responded with a warrior's style, causing Kaoru to elegantly force a smile.

"However, Kusanagi is not just your master. At the same time, he is also Erica-san and Yuri-san's master, as well as the [King] of all magi in the world. If you can't understand what I'm getting at, then Liliana-san is just a knight bodyguard at best. Am I correct?"

"Is there anything wrong with being a bodyguard? That is part of a knight's duty in serving the king!"

"Yes, nothing wrong with that, but while you are toiling away doing a guard and a servant's job, Erica-san and I are already fighting for the prime minister's position. Also, Erica and Yuri whom I recommended, either of them can become his first wife. Is this fine as well?"

Under the prankster-like questioning of the cross-dressing Hime-Miko, Liliana's eyes began to show signs of consternation.

"The History Compilation Committee is already planning on pledging their loyalty to Kusanagi Godou!?"

"I am just saying that this possibility is very likely, but it is still under review... Just kidding. If it was true, then those troublesome elders will not be a problem any more."

Kaoru pretended to be joking, but Yuri understood. Since the words just said—especially the last sentence, did not feel like just a joke.

"Even so, why must I return to my country?"

"It was just an example. My proposal is, since sooner or later we will all be serving the same [King] as master, we should cooperate. If possible, could you look after Yuri a bit? From your standpoint, having us as an ally should be advantageous, right?"

"What you mean is... for me to ally with the History Compilation Committee?"

"You don't have to answer straight away, but give it careful consideration. Also, though this is just my personal opinion, if you want to resist Erica, it'd be best to do some preparatory work first."

"This... fine, I will consider whether to ally with you or not."

Due to Liliana backing down, Kaoru resumed her friendly smiling face.

In truth, she had never considered getting rid of the knight from the Bronze Black Cross.

Even a strong competitor can be turned into a chess piece under her control. This was Kaoru's style. The preceding conversation was planned exactly for this result. Yuri received quite a fright. After Liliana's turn, it was going to be her next.

"Next, Yuri, I hope you can make a few clarifications."

It came after all. Kaoru was explaining in calm tones.

"Up to now, we have only requested that you play the role of Godou's lover in name only. But as you probably know, once Ena was sent here, the situation has changed drastically."

Kaoru explained fluently. Yuri began to consider her options.

Since her spirit sense was activated, she knew the gist of Kaoru's demands.

Ena and Erica were currently not present. More importantly, Godou was not here either. Subtly feeling the intentions of the History Compilation Committee and Sayanomiya Kaoru, Yuri wondered how she could answer in such a situation?

"I don't like to do tasteless things, and have no intention on forcing a loveless relationship on someone. So it's probably time for you..."

"No problem."

With determination, Yuri interrupted Kaoru with steady confidence.

"The feelings between Godou-san and I, will not end in simple friendship."

With an expression of decisiveness, Yuri looked straight ahead at the androgynous beauty.

Kaoru showed a rare expression of seriousness. Liliana went "Eh!?" followed by Amakasu making a "oh~~" expression from behind the sofa.

"I-I am not sure if I can become that great one's wife, but I will definitely achieve the closest position to that."

"Is this what your spirit vision told you? Or your own wish?"

Faced with Kaoru's sudden question, Yuri blushed and replied:

"Both... probably. The first time I saw Godou-san, I had a feeling that I would form an extraordinary relationship with him. Even now, whenever I think about his safety... I am full of unease."

From the start before meeting Kusanagi Godou.

Yuri had once been terrified at the thought of meeting the brutal Campione.

But after the first meeting she was able to relax her nervous emotions, and all her worries disappeared. In fact, she started lecturing the world renowned Devil King.

From that moment, she felt that she could get along well with him.

Now whenever she thinks about him who has gone missing and his current safety—

Uneasiness and fear precipitated in the depths of her heart. He must be saved, so Yuri must change herself and prayed to see him back safe and sound.

As these thoughts and feelings combined into one, an incredible idea came to mind.

Entrusting herself to this idea, and working hard towards it within her ability, Yuri made her decision.

"I see. Then you will offer your chastity to Kusanagi, right?"

"S-Sayanomiya! W-what are you saying!?"

"C-correct. Though I cannot give it to him right away, but in the foreseeable future, it will likely be inevitable..."

"Mariya Yuri, stop joining in this farce, what on earth are you saying!?"

Yuri ignored Liliana's protests and declared her will. Kaoru laughed awkwardly and said:

"Well since everything has been spelled out to this extent, I have nothing more to say. It's sufficient, Yuri."

"T-then, may I add something?"

Enduring everyone's gaze focusing on her, Yuri spoke:

"I will follow Godou-san to the corners of the world, and even if the Committee commands me to harm him, I will never comply. If he decides to distance himself away from the Committee, then I will leave the Committee in order to follow him. Please do not forget this!"

Riding on her rising emotion, Yuri made the above declaration.

After Kaoru and Amakasu went "Hey, this is really..." and "She's quite something", the two of them looked at each other, and then the master showed an expression as if playing a joke. With a serious face, Kaoru spoke:

"I will bear that in mind, Hime. Then Amakasu, as the wedding gift, go take *that* out."

"Ah—I really have to go to the storeroom after all? No other way around it..."



As soon as the word "storeroom" was spoken, the tables in the study began to shake, and so did the bookshelves.

It did not seem like an earthquake. From the corner of the room, the sharp noise of something breaking could be heard.

Yuri and Liliana exchanged glances, as a witch she sensed it—here in this building existed an inhuman resident.

"You two already found out? Amazing, how sharp of you. Those required herbs are kept in my family's storeroom. In it are the collections of the ancestors over the ages. Whenever anyone wants to touch them, great-grandfather will be very naggy, and even make a troublesome commotion."

"Kaoru-san's great-grandfather—that is the previous previous Sayanomiya family head!"

Sayanomiya Koremichi. The founder of the History Compilation Committee who went to Europe to study foreign magic. Born in the Meiji period and passed away in the fortieth year of the Shouwa period.

Recalling his biographical information, Yuri fell silent. This meant...

"All the heads of the Sayanomiya family, throughout the ages, were avid and compulsive collectors. Even after their deaths they would watch over those collections. But other than Amakasu receiving a few near death experiences on his way to retrieving things from the storeroom, there is no real danger, so don't worry."

"That is why I said, please do not ask me to do things exceeding my salary! I just can't stand this!"

"What's wrong, shouldn't ninja's serve the public selflessly?"

"That ridiculous description is what binds us to labor under extremely hazardous working conditions!"

From the little argument between the superior and the subordinate, Yuri and Liliana's eyes were wide with surprise at the revelation of the haunted house.

But now they have all the preparations to save Godou and the rest.

"Then let us start preparing the ritual for entering the Astral Realm... To be honest I have only used this kind of high level magic once, so I cannot be completely confident."

Liliana seemed to be trying to chase away her doubt.

"But I will try my best, and I hope everyone will assist me."

"If that's the case, I have a suggestion. Since there are specializations in spells, though you are both miko's, let Yuri handle the aspects of the Astral Realm then progress will be much faster."

Kaoru spoke as she looked over.

Yuri also agreed, since her spirit vision was what the western magi called extracting [Memories of the Void]. If that was the case, then the one most suitable for taking action on the other side was—

Meanwhile, the two trapped in the Ghostly Realm could do nothing but take it easy.

Their location did not change. Amongst the empty streets and in the empty park, Godou sat on the grass while Erica lazily used his thigh as a pillow to lie on.

"Is it really ok to do nothing like this..."

"No other way, because there is nothing we can do."

Compared to the worried Godou, Erica was very relaxed.

"Knowing we have disappeared, Yuri and Liliana will surely start searching, so all we need to do is wait for them."

"Can we be found?"

"It's not impossible. With Yuri's spirit vision and Liliana's magic combined... But it could take a while. The only concern is the duration the [Youth] protection will last for."

Erica analyzed calmly as she pressed her cheek against Godou's lap pillow.

"Probably could last a while, but the protection cannot be maintained indefinitely... So, the only thing we can do now is affirm our love for each other."

"How did it come to this!? We should be using our time for something more constructive!"

"With my knowledge and magic, nothing can be done about the current situation. Same for Godou's authority. Look, there's nothing to do but wait. So, let's do something that neither of us will regret."

Lying on Godou's lap, Erica turned to face Godou.

Heart beginning to race, she showed a happy and satisfied expression that was incomparable to the past.

"Godou just now was great... That savagery, and even ordering me... Hoho, injecting some freshness like that once in a while is not bad."

"I-is that so? Whatever, if you didn't mind, it's fine."

Godou suppressed his anxiety.

The way he lost control just now, was probably under the influence of Verethragna's authority.

During the ritual, Erica and him seemed to be caught in a very abnormal state.

"Yes, about the protection obtained just now."

Erica did not notice Godou's anxiety, and caressed her abdomen.

"Over here, there seems to be a very warm and vigorous mass of life energy. Just feeling this spot makes me feel very happy... As if our child was in my belly."

"What—!? Y-your description is too inappropriate!"

"Ah, but I am the one feeling it, so your objection is overruled. By the way, can I have a real baby with you?"

"No! Please save your dream speech for when you are sleeping!"

Resolutely refusing Erica's request, Godou made a decision.

When someone precious was caught in a crisis, the [Youth] could be used to protect that person. But using that technique required engaging in those kinds of activities...

Forbidden. He must seal the [Youth] and never use it ever again.

"Really, can't you continue showing me that manliness from just now?"

Erica was beginning to have fits like a spoilt child.

But with the vulnerable expression on her face as she rested on his thigh, it was so cute that it was breaking rules.

If the two of them continued isolated like that, how much longer could he endure? Who could have thought it was so difficult to ignore the cries of 'just give in to temptation' in the depths of his heart?

Godou was going mad from unease and anxiety.

"—Godou-san, Erica-san!"

A familiar cute voice.

Lifting his head, he saw Mariya Yuri appear in her miko outfit.

Finally seeing that familiar face that he missed. However, Godou felt rather embarrassed to be caught in such a posture in the middle of that kind of conversation!

"Yuri! You found us after all!"

Changing her pleading attitude, Erica went back to her usual cheerful voice, finally getting up from Godou's lap.

"Yes, yes. But what were you two doing in that kind of posture... Too shameless!"

Yuri scolded loudly.

Godou bowed his head in shame. It was just as she described, and he could not bear to face her in that kind of situation.

"What's the matter, it's been a while since I got some alone time with Godou. However... Fine, I did take advantage of the situation, so I will speak to Godou and let you have him next time. Does that work?"

Just as Erica was responding to Yuri with a beautiful smile that was impossible to refuse, Godou's heart was yelling out "that clearly won't work."

"N-next time for me... Erica-san, please do not say that. B-because I... still have not prepared myself yet..."

Yuri spoke softly and was blushing as if she had a high fever.

She even stole a glance at Godou but quickly shifted her gaze away. What was going on? Godou felt troubled, for Yuri was acting a bit differently compared to before.

"M-Mariya what is going on with her..."

"I think she has accepted certain things, and made many preparations. Since she always had that intention, it's probably time for you to be prepared."

As Godou muttered unable to grasp the situation, Erica whispered in response.

Prepare? Intention? What does it all mean?

"Did Lily send you over here? Who could have thought she even got the potion."

"Yes, thanks to the assistance of the History Compilation Committee, we finally reached here. Liliana-san who performed the ritual, actually wanted to come here herself... But since it would be more convenient for me to come to the Ghostly Realm..."

"Yes, with powerful spirit vision, Yuri can easily obtain information from this world."

Seamlessly, the two of them had transitioned the conversation to practical matters.

More convenient for Yuri to be here? Seeing Godou's incredulous expression, Erica immediately explained.

"You must have experienced it already, if you want to obtain information, you can get it through spirit vision. When Yuri came to this world, she immediately found us using spirit vision and then used that image to instantaneously fly over here with ease. Am I correct?"

"Yes, but just to be safe, it is best to avoid using spirit vision here as much as possible."

Yuri surveyed the surroundings as she spoke with apprehension.

"Yes, compared to the real world, my power here becomes stronger. However... if any minor mistake is made, it could become dangerous—this is the kind of unpleasant feeling I am getting."

Godou recalled Ena who went too far with divine possession.

"If so, then the faster we get out the better. Actually, Seishuuin already returned to earth, and just like the way Mariya described, she has become abnormal. The power of Susanoo and Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi has invaded her body, and we must save her."

"Eh!? Something went wrong when Ena performed divine possession in the Ghostly Realm?"

After showing great surprise, Yuri became serious.

"If that is the case, then we cannot dally... Everyone, please come to my side."

Godou and Erica approached as Yuri directed.

As if praying far away to the other side, Yuri closed her eyes and was surrounded by blue light.

Was this the marker to bring them all back to earth?

As he thought, Godou's body was pulled up high into the air. The surface of the Ghostly Realm he was just standing on, became very distant almost instantly.

By the time he realized it, Godou and the rest were in the yard of a house he had never visited before.

They were back in their original world? Though he didn't know how much time has passed, the sky was completely dark. The majestic Tokyo Imperial Palace could be seen not far away, so this must be the central part of the Chiyoda ward.

Within the premises of an old house, this must be the home of someone rich.

Suddenly he noticed complicated and strange shapes and diagrams inscribed neatly on the ground, as well as indecipherable letters and pictograms that seemed like a spell.

These were likely the remnants of magic. Godou looked around.

Beside him were Erica and Yuri who looked exhausted, while Liliana Kranjcar was also running towards him.

"Kusanagi Godou! You have returned safely!"

With silver hair like a fairy, the witch was holding back her tears, and her face was especially emotional.

Feeling apologetic for making her worry so much, Godou also noticed two other people.

Amakasu who was wearing a dress shirt, and a handsome fellow in the corner of the yard.

"Kusanagi-san, your safe return is more important than anything. To your homecoming, let me express my utmost joy."

"Amakasu-san! You came at the right time, do you know where is Seishuuin now!?"

In the same instant as he questioned the simple looking agent.

A chilling wind began to blow, and then it strengthened and even started to rain.

—A storm was arriving. Godou clearly felt a battle vigor awaken from within his body.

This was surely in reaction to something similar to a god nearby.

"This must be caused by Seishuuin Ena and Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi."

"Erica, you can tell?"

"Yes, probably because Godou gave me Verethragna's protection, I can feel it."

At some point in time, everyone's gaze had focused on Godou and Erica.

Yuri, Liliana, Amakasu as well as the handsome character seen for the first time.

The last person was androgynous, and possessed good looks that could very well belong to either a handsome youth or a beautiful girl. He or she smiled at Godou and nodded.

"I am Sayanomiya Kaoru, and Amakasu's boss, as well as a Hime-Miko like Yuri and Ena."

"Hime-Miko?"

"Many people have expressed surprise at that, but let's put it aside. Just now you were saying Ena and Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi are responsible for this? Could you explain the details of the situation to me?"

Someone who was clearly around the same age group, but turning out to be Amakasu's boss. Godou felt there was something wrong with Sayanomiya Kaoru's self introduction. As he prepared to respond...

'—Save it, because the Campione has returned to this world.'

The voice identical to that troublesome girl.

But it was definitely not her normal tone of voice.

Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi and Seishuuin Ena's body, were standing on the wall that surrounded the house.

The figure of Ena drenched in rain, gave a kind of hollow impression like some sort of puppet or a doll.

Was it because Yuri or Amakasu were being watched? Or did the divine blade have supernatural senses that discovered the Campione's return?

No matter what, the timing of her appearance was rather delicate.

Godou was determined. If this continued, as long as she continued to be possessed in this state, Ena's body will collapse sooner or later. She needed to have some sense beaten into her to wake up... But the question was, how should she be beaten?

Verethragna's ten incarnations were all too powerful to be used against humans.

As Godou hesitated, Liliana stepped forward.

"Kusanagi Godou, please leave this to me. All we need to do is catch that woman, right? I cannot tolerate her rampaging around any more."

"Lily, she is currently not someone you can handle alone, I will join too."

This was said by Erica of course.

Cuore di Leone and Il Maestro.

In the hands of the two knights, their respective magic swords appeared. And then their brightly colored bandiera capes were also summoned around their shoulders.

The cape striped red and black, as well as the cape striped blue and black.

These were what the Templar Knights called the flags of army commanders and brave knights. On Godou's right stood Erica in red, while the left was Liliana in blue.

In front of the red and blue knights, the Hime-Miko wielding the sword spoke without moving her lips.

'...Mere humans challenging me, the divine blade, and my miko? Rude fellows who do not know their place.'

This contempt came not from the miko, but from the divine blade.

However, its will to fight had been provoked, and Ena jumped down from the wall onto the road outside. Presumably to find an open area, she began running towards the main road.

Even though she was controlled like a puppet, he motions were extraordinarily swift.

Erica and Liliana also pursued with speed akin to flying.

Godou also frantically ran after them, from the scenery he recognized, this was the area around Chidorigafuchi.^[3]

At the cemetery entrance was an intersection, and opposite was a road for taking walks where trees were densely planted. Nearby was the Shuto Expressway, as well as the palace moat of Chidorigafuchi, the stone walls surrounding the Imperial Palace, and many cherry blossom trees.

As Godou raced after them, a two on one battle was already unfolding along the green lanes of Chidorigafuchi.

On the hundreds of metres of walking lanes along the moat of the Imperial Palace, large numbers of cherry blossom trees were planted (primarily of the Yoshino cherry variety), turning into a beautiful sight every spring.

"What time is it now?"

"Almost one in the morning, though this usually has busy traffic, there are almost no pedestrians at this time."

To Godou's yelled question, Amakasu responded swiftly.

This young man easily caught up to Godou who was running at full strength.

(As a side note, Yuri was left behind long ago, while Kaoru showed no intention of following, and only motioned for Amakasu to chase after them.)

During the last battle against Ena who was controlled by Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi, Erica met with great defeat once.

Though it was now two against one, could they handle it? Using a Campione's authority will definitely kill Ena. Godou was caught in a dilemma as he worried about the outcome of the battle.

"Eli Eli lama sabachthani? Oh Lord, why hast thou forsaken me?"^[4]

"People, listen to David's song of mourning! How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!"^[5]

The red and blue knights employed their trump cards from the very start.

Both were lyrics singing praises to unparalleled warriors—quotes from the songs of the heroic King David.

The strongest secret moves which can even damage a god. Erica did not use it in the Ghostly Realm because she deemed it too dangerous to use spells which consumed too much magical power.

"But be not thou far from me, O Lord: O my strength, haste thee to help me. Deliver my soul from the sword; Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of wild oxen!"^[6]

Filled with despair, Erica's mournful wails resounded.

These were the "Golgotha Spells Words." Also known as the song of disaster, this was the hymn that Jesus Christ sang before he died while crucified at the site of Golgotha.

"From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty!"^[7]

Liliana's mournful requiem also reverberated in the surroundings.

This was the "Song of the Bow." A song of mourning that expressed the overwhelming pain and sorrow when the heroic King David grieved for his former master Saul and ally Jonathan.

"By the name of the Lord, praise be to the body of the Lord in the centre of the world, repent and worship!"

"O sword of Saul, the warrior's weapon fast as an eagle and strong as a lion. Descend into my hand now!"

The spell words of hate and despair were infused into Erica's magic sword.

The spell words of the ancient hero were infused into Liliana's magic sword.

The enemy who forced them to use their strongest weapons to assure victory, also began to chant a song of magic in a robotic voice.

"挂文忌之伎鴨 言久母綾尔畏伎..."^[8]

Was the one chanting Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi, or Ena?

From the fact that her lips moved, it was probably the latter. Before it could be fully discerned, the Hime-Miko's body moved like a puppet according to the rhythm of the song.

"明日香乃 真神之原尔 久堅能 天都御門乎 懼母 定賜而..."^[9]

Erica used Cuore di Leone to block the horizontal slash of Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi.

However, her whole body was sent flying.

She did not have the power to overcome the slashing attack.

Originally under similar circumstances in the Ghostly Realm, her beloved sword had been cut into two. This time it withstood the attack, thanks to the infusion of the spell words of Golgotha.

"神佐扶跡 磐隱座 八隅知之 吾大王乃 所聞見為..."[\[10\]](#)

Having sent Erica flying, the divine blade next attacked Liliana.

The blue knight attempted to entangle Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi using II Maestro, but was not successful, and like Erica, she too was blown away.

"背友乃國之 真木立 不破山越而 狩劍 和射見我原乃 行宮尔 安母理座而..."[\[11\]](#)

With stiff movements like a puppet, Ena was moving her arms, legs and body. However, her divine sword still swiftly sent the knights into a deadly crisis.

Despite being two against one, the two realized they were outmatched if they fought separately and began to confer.

"Although I hate to do this, we must now cooperate. Attack or defend, which do you choose?"

"I will defend and Lily attack. If there is a chance, use the bow attack!"

"Is that ok? If it hits, that miko cannot be unharmed."

"No other way, since she is using that kind of power, but try to use sword attacks as much as possible!"

"Understood!"

The two knights leaned against each other tightly.

Entrusting one side of their bodies to each other, Erica on the left and Liliana on the right, began to advance at the same speed.

Though they moved just as fast as before, their attacks were no longer as loose or disparate.

When the divine sword came slicing, Erica blocked ingeniously but did not counterattack.

If one were to keep defending in a one on one battle, the opponent would easily follow up their attacks. Without stopping the enemy's advance, one would end up in a disadvantaged position, however—

In place of Erica who focused on defense, Liliana now concentrated on attacking.

Completely ignoring defense, she started a series of attacks with such ferocity and intimidation that even the Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi could not counterattack as usual.

'...'

The divine sword and the miko did not say a word, but they clearly became more alert.

This was due to Erica and Liliana's formation, their distribution of offensive and defensive duties, their everchanging swapping of positions, and their brave simultaneous advance.

The Hime-Miko who had an overwhelming advantage against two opponents, was now being suppressed for the first time.

Godou was greatly surprised to see the brilliant cooperation between the red and blue knights at a crucial moment.

"Erica! I will now prepare the bow and arrow, please endure."

"Got it!"

In order to protect her partner, Erica stepped forward. Behind her, Liliana put away her magic sword, and in replacement a longbow giving off blue light appeared in her left hand—the Bow of Jonathan!

Godou had once heard about it during the battle against Perseus.

"The Song of the Bow" was the spell to create the Sword of Saul and the Bow of Jonathan.

Like Erica's magic sword infused with the "Golgotha Spell Words", the former was a sharp blade that can even cut gods.

The latter could summon using the spell words a bow for shooting attacks.

The number of shots was limited by the amount of remaining magical power. After one or two misses, the precious trump card will be wasted. In the battle against Perseus, Godou saw her fire multiple arrows at once.

This was an illusion used to confuse enemies to ensure the target was hit with certainty.

Summoning this trump card, Liliana was now seeking a decisive end to the battle!

—However the Hime-Miko saw through her intentions, and also prepared to use her own trump card.

"天下 治賜 食國乎 定賜等 鷄之鳴 吾妻乃國之 御軍士乎 嘵賜而 千磐破 人
乎和為跡 不奉仕 國乎治跡"^[12]

The spell song for vanquishing barbarians. And then, Ena's body raised Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi above her head.

Wind swirled and gathered.

From beneath Ena's feet the violent wind blew like a vortex, forming a mini-tornado.

"Lily, hurry!"

"I know! O Bow of Jonathan, the warrior's weapon fast as an eagle and strong as a lion—!"

In Liliana's right hand appeared four arrows with blue light.

At that instant, Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi slashed horizontally. Erica tried to block with Cuore di Leone but was deflected away.

Both Erica and Liliana's bodies, were devoured by the tornado formed from under Ena's feet.

"Ah ah ah ah ah!"

"Wa wa wa wa wa!?"

Along with their screams, the two knights were thrown high up into the air by the tornado.

Thrown into the air and then mercilessly dropped onto the ground!

Liliana's blue bow and arrows had disappeared from her hands, and she seemed to have fainted.

"E-Erica-san, Liliana-san!"

"Things are not looking well, Kusanagi-san, what are you going to do?"

Arriving out of breath, Yuri saw this decisive scene, and her face instantly turned white.

Beside her was Amakasu questioning calmly. Godou ignored the two of them and ran towards Ena.

'—Finally, the god-slayer.'

Lips motionless, the Hime-Miko spoke softly with blank stares.

Godou was speechless, the opponent was definitely very strong.

However, even if Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi was a divine sword, what it controls was still a human body whose strength was limited. A Campione's instincts allowed Godou to discern the true nature of the enemy.

Seishuuin Ena whose body was taken by the divine sword, possessed power that surpassed human magi.

Her current level was probably about the same as the dragon at Naples or the divine beasts sighted at Sardinia.

But compared to a [Heretic God], it was not a huge threat.

For example if the [Camel] was used, a simple victory was likely assured. However, Ena's body would be at risk if it had to withstand an attack from Godou's authority.

Emergency situations required emergency measures. Still...

"Godou, it's not your turn yet. Can you leave things to me?"

Someone was speaking to him.

The origin of the voice was Erica who was struggling to get up.

Summoning Cuore di Leone to her side, she used it as a crutch for support.

"If I keep getting defeated by her and lie down here, it would tarnish the reputation of I, Erica Blandelli."

"Ok, you should just lie down and rest, you've reached your limits!"

"No—the battle has just begun... I was about to glamorously reverse the tides of battle in the second round? Do not get in my way...!"

Erica got up completely.

Though she was putting up a front, she did make an intense declaration that did not fit her usual style.

She gazed at Ena with burning pupils, the Hime-Miko responded with a puppet's gaze and expression.

Stop her? Or let her continue fighting? Of course she must be stopped.

There was no doubt. If she continued fighting, she would die. After concluding Erica had no hope of winning, she must be stopped no matter what—

...Wait a minute. Was there really no hope of winning?

The divine sword sent Liliana flying and unconscious with just one strike.

However Erica was able to bear it. Though she has been consuming her magic and receiving attacks all along, she should have been weaker than Liliana. Could there be a power protecting her? —Of course!

As Godou realized this point, his eyes met with Erica.

His gaze moved down towards her lower abdomen.

Accompanying the expression of sudden realization, she placed her hand over her abdomen there. It looked like she has noticed as well.

"I forgot, my body currently has Godou's protection within it... I beseech the source of my magic, the seal of the Copper Black Cross, grant to me the knight's medal of honor!"

Carrying magical power, spell words were spoken out from her mouth.

At the same time, a change was produced.

Erica's red and black bandiera transformed into a long cape-like upper garment, its lower edges reaching down to her knees. Fluttering intensely, its form was like a ferocious bird of prey with its wings spread out.

And then there was Cuore di Leone.

Originally a slender sword, the steel of the lion transformed into the form of a lance.

From the steel barbs, it looked like the cavalry lances used by medieval knights of legend. If its length was shortened to about two metres or so, it would be a one-handed infantry lance.

Holding this lance in her right hand, an oval iron shield was held in her left.

The colors of bright red and jet black crisscrossed her fluttering battle garment. Equipped with a knight's lance and shield, Erica's heroic figure was that of a holy knight crowned with a crest of the cross.

"Eh? Why does Erica-san have Godou-san's—Verethragna's power!?"

Yuri was very surprised and probably saw the reason of the change using spirit vision.

But Godou was equally surprised for he never expected the [Youth] protection to bring about such a change—victory was possible.

"Erica, is it possible? Can you defeat Seishuuin?"

"Of course! The current me will not lose to that woman again!"

This promise heralded the beginning of the second round.

In spite of clumsy footsteps, Ena charged forward with exceptional speed. Holding the divine sword with both hands, she slashed in a diagonal manner from the top right to the bottom left.

Erica used the oval shield to block.

The jet black divine sword clashed intensely with the shield. Sparks flew from where they made contact, releasing intense divine power. They were evenly matched.

However on Erica's side, she still had a lance in her other hand.

She thrusted with all her might, but before the point reached its destination, Ena's body had jumped backwards like a locust.

And so, Erica kicked at the ground.

Faced with Ena's retreat, she charged forward like a stallion.

A tide of continuous attacks like the onslaught of wrathful waves. Ena rolled along the ground, evading the dozens of attacks from the point of the lance. In the process of rolling, she still managed to use her sword to slash at the calves of the pursuing Erica.

With outstanding reflexes, Erica evaded using small steps to the side.

Stopping Erica's wave of attacks, Ena quickly got up.

"How amazing, for her to fight evenly with Ena-san who is being controlled by Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi, it's like the image of a supernatural entity."

Amakasu sounded very impressed.

Yuri and Liliana, who had regained consciousness, were also watching the battle with surprise.

"Kusanagi Godou... Is that the effect of the final [Youth] incarnation? What a terrifying power, anyway, to have let Erica stolen first place, I really must complain."

Under Yuri's care, Liliana seemed a bit regretful.

The process of bestowing protection must definitely be kept secret. Godou swore to himself as he nodded lightly.

Then a surprising turn of events occurred, for Ena started laughing.

"Ha! Ha, hahahahaha! Too great, Erica-san, I am truly impresed, I never thought that you can be just as strong as me, who has absorbed divine power."

The cheerful soprano voice that had been absent for so long.

Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi has allowed Ena to speak, unlike the earlier clear cold tones.

This was the original voice of the cute swordsman who casually enjoyed all the chaos being wrought. Godou wondered if it was because the state of divine possession had been released, but immediately knew he was wrong.

This was because the battle spirit infused in her, from Susanoo and Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi, had become even more heightened.

"Excellent, then let's have a true duel once again, starting now!"

Yelling out, Ena's jet black divine blade flashed brightly.

With sparks splashing about noisily, Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi gave off pale white lightning. It possesed the divine power of the conquering god of steel, and bestowed power by the storm god and king of Susa—Susanoo, its power was increasing.

Ena brandished that sword as easily as if it was her own limb, and held it tightly with both hands straight in front of her chest.

Up until now, she was in a state completely dominated by divine power and spirit, without a shred of emotion.

However, through the joy and thrill of battle, Ena finally retrieved her emotions.

And then entered a state of resonance with Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi!

"Last time I defeated you with this move, what will happen this time? Ama no Murakumo! Seize it!"

Ena pointed the blade at Erica, and it gave off a terrifying pulse which attacked the female knight.

Very clearly, it was an attack that absorbed magical power.

"Useless, your move won't work a second time!"

Erica grabbed the lower hem of her red and black garment and waved.

This blocked the pulse from the divine sword. That piece of fabric seemed to possess magical defensive ability almost equal to a Campione's.

Ena smirked unfazed, lifting the divine sword upwards.

As Erica defended her body with the shield, she aimed the lance at Ena. It was the stance of a frontal charge.

—A direct conclusion to the duel.

As Ena declared, both sides prepared for the end.

The two charged forward at the same time and collided violently.

As the divine sword swung down, the lance was thrusted forward!

Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi struck Erica on the shoulder, but the point of contact was the part near the hilt.

Cuore di Leone pierced into Ena's body, but it was just a glancing blow to the left abdomen.

Neither was a decisive blow.



Erica's charge was too rapid and thus did not get cut by Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi's sharpest part; with motions like a wild beast, Ena had narrowly evaded Erica's fatal attack at the last second.

However, this exchange has not ended.

It was true that the attack of the lance was evaded.

However, with the shield raised high, Erica charged with her entire body. This was the real frontal charge!

Ena's delicate body was blown away as if struck by a car collision.

"Hmm—!?"

"This is a knight's style... A frontal charge to break through the enemy's ranks. Do you feel it?"

To the fallen Ena, with irregular breathing, Erica declared victory.

However, the winning side also sank to her knees immediately.

Her bandiera and Cuore di Leone had returned to normal, and it looked like she too was at her limits.

"Yes, felt it... I surrender."

Ena tried to use Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi as a crutch for support... but gave up finally.

Holding the divine blade, she was lying on the road. Though her body was immobile, her face had a satisfied expression.

It was like those youth movies during the Shouwa period, the required performance at the end of a riverside duel. Godou shrugged his shoulders but suddenly noticed.

The storm which appeared with Ena had not subsided. In fact it was getting stronger?

As the violent wind howled, massive droplets of rain bombarded Godou and the surface of the road.

"—Mariya!"

"Godou-san, it has not ended yet! Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi intends to continue fighting!"

In the instant he asked Yuri, he got the answer.

Godou rushed towards the divine sword, planning on snapping it in half—but was a step too late.

Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi began to expand in size.

The roughly one metre blade expanded nonstop, and also started to change its form.

...Very long. By visual estimates, it was roughly twenty metres or so.

The jet black blade became a body, forming arms and legs. Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi has transformed into a giant.

A sword originally the weight of a woodcutter's tool, its blade now pointed up towards the heavens to form a vertical body.

Connected to two sides of its body were two blades—the arms, and around the approximate position of the elbows there were even joints for the arms to bend.

Then there were the legs, made of solid steel, thicker and heavier than even the body and the arms.

Compared to the length of the body, the legs were rather short, giving a somewhat unpleasant look. Overall, it gave off the feeling of being extremely sharp.

The giant of blades. Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi has transformed into a giant of blades who could slice through everything with a simple swing. At the point which corresponded to a shoulder, Ena's body was stuck inside there.

"King..."

From within Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi, a quiet voice was heard.

"Seishuuin, are you ok? Can you escape from there!?"

"No—looks like not... I have no strength. Can Ena make a request?"

It was Ena's normal voice, this time she really seems to be released from divine possession.

"If you are asking to be saved, just wait a little, I am already thinking about how to save you."

"No, I don't want to bring you any more trouble..."

Ena responded to Godou in a philosophical tone.

As they conversed, the sword giant—Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi started moving on its short stubby legs, its direction of advance was towards Godou!

"Ama no Murakumo is still in high spirits for a battle with the king. Since that's the case, could the king please defeat it quickly with your power? It should be a simple task, right? Please do not mind Ena..."

"What do you mean, don't mind you!?"

"After all, everything is my fault... My own willfulness. But in the end I did get to fight a very interesting and meaningful battle, so Ena has no regrets. Please do not mind and quickly defeat it. Farewell."

Towards the end, Ena's voice could no longer be heard.

In its place, was the approaching Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi. Though it had transformed into a giant of blades, its legs were very short and did not have any joints, so it was sliding along as if kneeling.

Godou looked around at everyone present.

Erica had already used up all her strength in the intense battle just now. The [Youth] protection has disappeared, and all her magic and stamina were consumed. Even so, she was still struggling to stand up to protect Godou.

Liliana who had been knocked out earlier by Ena's attack, was trying to use her shaking body to summon II Maestro, and likewise planned to battle.

On the other hand, with worried eyes Yuri was watching the divine blade which had devoured Ena.

And then there was Amakasu calmly muttering things like "ara ara, how troublesome." Though he spoke like that, it was clear that he did not have the power to defeat the out of control Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi.

The first thing to do was to leave this place and keep everyone at a safe distance.

Deciding that, Godou began to run.

Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi's legs were short, and its mobility was terrible. No matter how gigantic it was, running away from it should be a simple task—but just as this thought entered Godou's mind...

Just as he was running past, the sword monster suddenly caught up with unexpected speed.

Due to an ominous feeling, Godou watched his back as he continued running. Thanks to that, he confirmed his suspicions as Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi sliced down with its right arm blade.

A sound of swish. This was a sound that could split apart air and even rain water.

If the blade had aimed forward another few tens of centimetres, Godou's body would have been sliced cleanly in half.

Such a sharp sword, and its range of attack was so wide!

"No way, king... Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi has no plans for mercy, so please destroy it quickly... Hurry, or else it will catch up to you!"

It was Ena's voice again, and it seemed like she has not lost consciousness. But there was no leisure to listen to her.

Godou stopped looking back.

Running full speed ahead, he definitely will not be caught.

Racing along Chidorigafuchi, the Imperial Palace could be seen opposite. Decorating along the palace moat were the conspicuous trees, the very well-known cherry blossoms.

Since he had increased the distance between them, Godou finally stopped running.

The blade monster transformed from Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi, was chasing along at a clumsy rate. To be honest, it was very slow and it would be easy to just keep running away, but that would only delay the problem without solving it.

"Kusanagi-san, only one solution remains. Didn't Ena say it already?"

Suddenly a man's voice came from beside.

Turning to the source, Godou caught a fright. Amakasu was standing there without any signs of being out of breath.

"W-when did you follow along?"

"I've been chasing from behind all along. I can run pretty fast you know. Anyway, that thing there is more important, if we let that gigantic divine sword rampage, who knows how the situation will develop..."

Amakasu made a very reasonable complaint.

But Godou pointed out the detail he had ignored.

"Is it ok to let Seishuuin get caught in between? She is currently bound tightly to the sword!?"

"My opinion is there is no other way. As she said so herself, it is all her fault. In this kind of situation, even my boss, Sayanomiya Kaoru will approve as the one responsible for the History Compilation Committee. Because there is no other way."

No other way... Was it really true? No, Godou did not agree.

He has not done what he should. Nothing has been attempted. In such a situation, concluding "no other way" was too hasty!

"If so, I will only say this. No matter what, save Seishuuin first, then handle the monster. How's that?"

"Oh, there's such a convenient plan? How are you going to do it?"

"There's no plan yet! I'll just think it up as I go along! This is dangerous, you retreat first!"

Hearing Godou's answer, Amakasu showed an expression of surprise.

But there was no time to tend to Amakasu as Godou focused his attention on the approaching Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi.

Once again, it swung down its right arm blade. The massive blade approached Godou's head. So fast! Despite its immense body size, its sword strikes were extraordinarily skilled.

However, it was precisely because of that reason, this could be used. The incarnation that was unlocked when facing a high speed attack.

Godou used the [Raptor].

Other than himself, everything in the world slowed down, and only Godou accelerated.

Calmly dodging the giant block of steel that was about to slice his head off, and then rushing onto the body of the blade due to the massive increase in agility and jumping ability.

Easily running along the surface of the blade that was acting as an arm, he reached the shoulder location where Ena was buried.

The imprisoned Hime-Miko showed a relaxed expression that seemed to say "my life has no regrets—"

What a worrying fellow, and yet she is acting so casual... A little shocked, Godou grabbed Ena's shoulder.

Pulling hard, though she seemed to be stuck tight, her body budged slightly.

Very good, now pull once again with full strength. Excellent, she is finally released.

Even at this moment, Ena still carried that spaced out expression, because Godou was still in a state of acceleration, this was only natural. Carrying the uniformed miko in his arms, Godou jumped off from the back of Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi.

He originally wanted to attack it from behind.

Regrettably, the [Raptor] authority did not have the destructive power to defeat this thing, so Godou gave up on that thought.

Looking ahead, Yuri was running towards him.

Panting heavily, she stopped to regulate her breathing. To Godou who was in an accelerated state, Yuri looked like she was completely motionless.

Erica and Liliana also came following.

Due to their injuries, even Yuri was faster than them. Godou laid out Ena before them. Next, how should he take care of Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi?

Though he thought of a way, would it work smoothly? Godou prepared to use the next incarnation.

The accelerated state ended and returned to normal.

"Mmm... no good after all. M-my chest—!"

Godou pressed against his heart as he sank to his knees and fell over forward.

After using the [Raptor] incarnation, there was a side effect of heart pain, as well as a temporary state of immobility. His expectatons were too naive.

"...G-Godou-san, why are you here!? Even Ena-san!?"

"Eh? I was clearly caught by Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi? Why are Ena and the king here?"

The voices of the Hime-Miko pair were heard.

However, this was not something Godou had time to pay attention to. Simply enduring the pain was consuming all his strength.

Before he realized it, the Hime-Miko pair had held him in their arms and placed him in a sitting position.

"You used the [Raptor] incarnation, right? Which is how you resuced Ena-san..."

"Yes, that's right. If my condition improved slightly, I can destroy that sword, but it's impossible right now. Why don't you two run away..."

Godou made a suggestion as he nodded to the highly observant Yuri.

The pain in his heart was unbearable, but at the very least he must make sure these two are saved—

Having lost him from its sights, Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi was looking around, searching for signs of Godou. In this situation, as long as they didn't take him along, they should be able to escape successfully.

However, Ena beside him spoke quietly.

"No, Ena will not escape. Because for things to come to this, Ena is responsible, and Ama no Murakumo is Ena's partner... I will slow him down, you guys first escape."

"Idiot! Even if you risk your life, you won't be able to stall for long!"

Though it was true, the Hime-Miko of the sword was not deterred.

Damn it, I put in so much effort to save you—as Godou gnashed his teeth, Yuri spoke decisively:

"Godou-san, you just need the ability to move temporarily, right?"

Yuri asked with a stern expression.

That unrelenting beauty, made Godou and Ena withdraw their words of protest.

"Yes, yes, as long as I can concentrate for a while..."

Concentrating his spirit and his power. If he didn't do that, he wouldn't be able to control that particular incarnation well. However, the pain in his chest was making him powerless. He was so close to obtaining victory!

As Godou gnashed his teeth...

Yuri's face suddenly drew near. No, not only her face, even her lips were approaching.

Brief contact? Lips to lips?

As Godou realized the situation, he was being kissed by Yuri!

Magical power flowed along with her sweet breath, and the pain in his chest was relieved. Why?

"Yes, if you don't apply spells from within the body, it will not work on the Devil Kings. So that's what it meant!"

"Yes, that is correct. Just now I poured restoration magic in through the mouth..."

Shivering from embarrassment, Yuri conversed with Ena.

As Godou lay shocked, he silently watched Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi.

It seemed to have noticed his location, and was advancing in a sliding manner, about twenty metres away.

"Understood! Then King, though Ena doesn't understand completely, I will also assist you. So you must win!"



"E-Ena!? Why, there is no need for you too..."

It came again, this time it was Seishuuin Ena who approached with her lips.

This was the third person he kissed today.

With the sound of "chuu~", the lips pressed together gave off a sound like a gust of light wind.

His pain had mostly subsided, but the extremities of his arms and legs were numb and his whole body felt powerless. The other side effect of the [Raptor]—the state of immobility had begun.

But there was still time to use *that*.

The power of the [Boar] incarnation—the ability to call forth the jet black gigantic beast from another world!

"May his spine be crushed; may his bones be broken, his tendons torn, his hair ripped from his skull; may his blood, spilled over the earth, be churned into a bloody froth. I shall become one who buries fangs into the sinner's flesh, that the will of the Lord be followed: Thou shalt be purged!"

After roaring with full strength, the entire pedestrian walking lane turned black.

The jet black [Boar] with its burly body, charged and ran out. The incarnation that could only be summoned to destroy a massive object, its target was now the gigantic Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi.

The massive monster whose body length measured twenty metres roughly, dwarfed the strange giant sword.

Chidorigafuchi had become the stage for the monster battle between the tall giant of blades and the [Boar].

The giant used its sharp and heavy blade to cut open the thick hide and muscles of the enormous jet black beast, but it immediately realized, it was just futile resistance.

In terms of destructive power, their levels differed by too much.

As the [Boar] bled blue-black blood, it roared joyfully, thrusting its tusks which did not lose to its opponent in sharpness, and using its entire body weight to charge, kick and trample.

Finally, from its mouth came a roar mixed with supersonic waves.

Suffering these violent attacks, Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi was sent flying again and again.

"Who could have thought that the difference in level was so vast between a messenger of god and something controlled directly by a god or a Campione..."

Godou lightly exclaimed as he continued to lie motionless for the time being.

There was nothing he could do to escape from the battlefield or tear his gaze away from the horrific sight.

Chasing after Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi into Chidorigafuchi, the [Boar] leapt into the palace moat, turning it into a battle in water. The surrounding stone walls of the Imperial Palace crumbled at the battering from the impact of the monsters' bodies, as well as the slashing attacks of the giant sword. It was now a time for no-holds-barred destruction.

Chidorigafuchi's landscape was being destroyed completely by the current events.

Every time the giant beast and the giant sword clashed violently, massive sprays of water splashed about from the palace moat.

The moat itself was being demolished, scooped out, sliced open and trampled by monstrous power.

The cherry blossom trees that brought joy to people every spring, was being seriously vandalized. Snapped, crushed, pulverized... Tokyo's famous cherry blossom sighting spot was gradually disappearing.

"Amazing, Kusanagi-san. Who knew a king could be so powerful!"

Ena was watching Godou with glimmering eyes, while Yuri and Godou sighed deeply.

"Sorry, Mariya, it became like this again..."

"No, no, this was unavoidable... I will pay penance together with you."

"Ending up like this again, anyway, let's just say it was to be expected."

"Yes, even for something created by the gods to fight directly against a Campione, resulting in this dismal state was most natural. There can be no other outcome."

As destruction continued to be wrought, Erica and Liliana lightly exclaimed, having gathered together.

From the tone of voice of these two, there was not even a slight sense of guilt.

On the other hand, Amakasu had vanished at some point, probably to begin operations to keep this incident in the dark.

And so, the culprits of this tragedy watched on, as the jet black [Boar] enjoyed its time destroying Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi, trampling Chidorigafuchi, and letting loose roars of victory that resounded across the sky.

Translator's Notes and References

1. ↑ **jikisan hatamoto**: (直参旗本) warriors granted the privilege of reporting directly to the shogun.
2. ↑ **daimyo**: (大名) a generic term referring to the powerful territorial lords in pre-modern Japan who ruled most of the country from their vast, hereditary land holdings.
3. ↑ **Chidorigafuchi**: (千鳥ヶ淵) a park at the northwestern section of the moat surrounding the Imperial Palace. Known for its cherry blossoms, it is home to the little known Chidorigafuchi National Cemetery for unidentified soldiers who died in World War II.
4. ↑ **Word of Abandonment**: quoted by Jesus from Psalm 22, it is the only saying that appears in more than one gospel (Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34).
5. ↑ 2 Samuel 1:27
6. ↑ Psalm 22:19-21
7. ↑ 2 Samuel 1:22
8. ↑ Poem #199 of the Man'youshuu.
9. ↑ Poem #199 of the Man'youshuu.
- 10.↑ Poem #199 of the Man'youshuu.
- 11.↑ Poem #199 of the Man'youshuu.
- 12.↑ Poem #199 of the Man'youshuu.

Epilogue

It was in the Boundary of Life and Immortality that was inhospitable to humans, the world where the soul was far more important than the body.

There, three elders were having a discussion.

Their location was a pavillion in a beautiful garden.

Though there were no servants, the place was kept very clean and tidy.

However, this was not something incredible, for the Boundary of Life and Immortality was composed of many different spaces.

In this broad realm, environments will change itself according to the preferences of the master.

The fact that the old god Susanoo lived deep in the mountains under violent storms was simply his preference.

"So, it's time to rate that Rakshasa King, right? You wanted to see how that person would treat those girls... which is why this commotion happened, right?"

The first one to speak was the great monk in black.

A living buddha was one who has freed himself from the restraints of the body at the end of a life of asceticism, thereby approaching immortality.

"Those who I consider good men, usually turn out to be excellent monarchs. When the sleeping child awakens, he will surely become the guardian of the earth."

The one who spoke was the glass princess.

The fair princess possessing pupils the color of glass and unparalleled beauty, her age actually surpassed the great monk by far.

As a side note, this elegant garden was her dominion.

"Princess, I believe your conclusion is too early. I find him too rash. Take this incident for example, there were actually many easier ways to solve the matter."

"Insignificant matters like this can always be solved in time."

The princess disagreed openly with the great monk's objection.

"Enlightened Master, did you forget? That person would help women even at the cost of hardship to himself. In every action from the way Kusanagi-sama treated the girls, I can see that he is someone who can be trusted with important matters."

"Yes, then Old Sir, what do you think?"

"From the tricky way he stole my sword, this brat cannot be underestimated."

The elderly god was the oldest present, and spoke in tones as if he was uninvolving.

"Though I was planning on sending the miko to him as a gift, I never said I would give up the sword as well. Yes he is impulsive, but I appreciate his qualities. Anyway, there is no need to make a decision immediately."

"That is to say--keep observing?"

To the question of the princess, Susanoo nodded generously.

"Yes, it is still uncertain whether the troublesome brat will wake up. Kusanagi's talents, let me savor them slowly."

"So in the end, all the rights and privileges to Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi has fallen to Kusanagi-san... Is that ok?"

It was at the Sayanomiya residence at Sanbanchou of the Chiyoda special ward.

Sayanomiya Kaoru sat on the rocking chair in the study, murmuring to herself as she rocked.

"Ena-san seems to think so, but it hasn't been confirmed yet. After that commotion, Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi still harbors great divine power, but the previous user Ena-san can no longer use it. Neither can she send it back to the original owner--the Old One. So that is the situation now."

The one who answered was Amakasu Touma.

The master and subordinate looked at the sword in its sheath lying on Kaoru's office desk.

Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi. Though this sword contained the deity of the conquering god, it was also a subordinate god to Susanoo.

"Due to Ena's divine possession losing control, Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi gained the status of an independent god, so Kusanagi-san who defeated it has usurped the god's authority... This explanation probably works."

Kaoru spoke as she gazed at the shattered divine blade.

"It could very well be his second authority. 'I will become the companion of one who is stronger than me', what a shounen manga development."

"Its appearance has been restored, but its internals are still broken, right?"

"It's embarrassing, but yes, it was destroyed quite thoroughly."

No matter what, a continued discussion was not going to yield the truth.

Towards the competent but not necessarily loyal subordinate, Kaoru ordered with frivolous tones:

"In any case this is something dangerous, and cannot be returned to Ena's possession. It is decided that it will be kept in the storeroom of this house. By the way, giving it to the temporary owner should be another option."

"I have also tried asking, but he refused because he did not want to break the firearms and weapons regulations."

"Kusanagi-san... has common sense in a surprising area, what a strange person."

"He definitely wouldn't want to be described like that."

Liliana Kranjcar was puzzled.

In front of her, Kusanagi Godou and Mariya Yuri were casually having lunch. However she felt that they had become even more intimate... Was this her imagination?

After the commotion caused by Seishuuin Ena and Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi, a few days have passed and it was the following week, lunchtime on a certain school day.

Like always, they were having lunch on the roof.

As usual, Liliana prepared lunch for Kusanagi Godou.

Today's menu was authentic Spanish seafood paella, as well as fruit, cheese, cucumber pickles, etc... However, beside it were two black wooden lunchboxes.

One contained salmon rice, with three green leaves scattered on top, providing a nice contrast of color for the food.

The other lunchbox was filled with side dishes. Kyoto roasted fish, spicy tofu, meatballs, a dish made of lappa and konjac, as well as various home made pickles...

Besides tasting excellent they also looked great, and just the sight of the food's beautiful appearance was a pleasurable experience.

Liliana looked at the lunch she prepared in a simple container, and could not help feeling uneasy. Though in taste she definitely did not lose to Yuri, perhaps she was greatly surpassed in terms of visual impact.

The one who brought these wooden lunchboxes was the Hime-Miko, Mariya Yuri.

"Mariya sure can cook well."

Godou praised as he tasted the various offerings, separated out onto paper plates.

"If this was taken to grandfather, it will definitely pass. That guy's mouth is extremely picky, especially towards Japanese cuisine. But this taste is definitely good enough."

"Uh, thanks. But even if it passes for grandfather, how about Godou-san...?"

Being praised, Yuri asked with apprehension.

Probably because she was so concerned with Godou's response and opinion, her expression did not have any confidence.

"Umm, could it be that it does not suit your tastes?"

"No no, how could that be possible, your cooking is very delicious."

"Is that so? Then I am relieved... However, if you dislike anything, you must be honest, I will remember it."

"Don't say that. This kind of luxurious lunch, no matter how it's made it will be very delicious."

Reassured and smiling once again, Yuri was acting towards Godou in a natural manner without any stiffness.

Liliana was sure. These two people could not have behaved so naturally before. They used to be polite but distant, and now it was all gone...!

"Godou-san, if you have something that you like, do you want me to get it for you with chopsticks?"

"Yes, but this kind of little thing I can do myself, no need to trouble yourself."

"But I am closer to the lunchbox... It will be easier for me."

Holding the paper plate and the serving chopsticks, Yuri asked. Though Godou had refused, he immediately changed his tune to "you are right" and made two or three requests afterwards.

Hearing these exchanges, Liliana's heart was filled with anxiety.

Recently when she made the same requests, Godou would always refuse her resolutely with "no need, it's fine!"

If she wanted to take care of him or serve him like before, Godou would be very wary of how others viewed him, and ran away.

Saying something like losing a man's dignity, I'm not a leecher on women, etc... All these puzzling speeches.

However, why could Mariya Yuri--!

"Liliana-san, is there anything you would like? Please take anything that suits your fancy."

"Uh, no problem, please do not mind me."

Liliana frantically played dumb.

Yuri was like a well-mannered high class lady, full of benevolent smiles.

She was nowhere as reserved as before, what was the reason for this change?

"As different as the north wind and the sun, so goes the saying."

Sitting on the side, Erica Blandelli murmured to herself.

Appearing without a lunch again, she gave herself good reason to plunder Yuri and Liliana's lunchboxes.

"Yuri's strengths match very well with Godou's value system. Once their relationship passed a certain point, it was only natural to expect this kind of situation. Though she ran into some difficulties lately, but before that, their relationship already showed hints of this."

The [Diavolo Rosso] explained as if she saw through everything.

"E-Erica, what on earth is going on?"

"Exactly as you see, Godou is completely unwary of her, and Yuri can act naturally beside him and apply herself towards what a 'woman' can do. This is something that neither I nor Lily can manage."

"Are you saying that my master is wary of me!? What an insult!"

Liliana was protesting with a voice that only Erica could hear.

However, Erica sneered with pity, and Liliana could not help feeling terrified.

"Lily, this war cannot be won with desire and instinct alone. Of course, if you are satisfied with being just a 'convenient woman,' then that's another matter."

"W-what are you saying!?"

I know him better than you.

Implying that and bragging to herself, Erica's expression was especially contemptible. However, Liliana did agree that the situation was not good. Kusanagi Godou and Mariya Yuri getting along so well was a huge problem.

As the knight guarding over him, how could she get in between them?

Wait a minute, come to think of it she just negotiated with Sayanomiya Kaoru, and agreed to ally with them. As it stands, she could only stand aside and watch things develop...

Liliana agonized in depression, when suddenly Kusanagi Shizuka's voice was heard.

"Really! Brother and Mariya-senpai has been flaunting their affection all this time! And getting increasingly intimate! This has to stop! You look like fools, how unsightly!"

She complained with great agitation.

With an unfazed expression, Godou and Yuri simply looked at Shizuka, their sister and junior respectively.

"What affection... Aren't we just eating lunch normally?"

"Yes, Shizuka-san, stop saying strange things. Quiet down and have lunch."

Being criticized instead, Shizuka's shoulders trembled with rage.

"Hmm... Your attitudes sure are unified, and you dare say you are not affectionate? What is going on, it's like a couple who has been married for years, totally shameless!"

"What married couple, you idiot, don't make jokes like that."

"Yes, calling us a married couple... Actually, not yet..."

The two denied as they looked at each other, and shyly bowed their heads at the same time.

As Liliana endured the shock of watching their interactions, a new girl appeared on the roof.

Casting everything aside, Liliana and Erica exchanged glances, for the intruder was Seishuuin Ena.

"Ena-san! Your body has recovered?"

"Yes, well enough, sorry to everyone, I've troubled you all this time."

The yamato nadeshiko style Hime-Miko responded as she approached the group.

Due to Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi missing from her shoulder, it felt a little strange.

According to rumors, the recent frequent storms were due to her. It was said that the storms were summoned using divine power after communicating with Susanoo in the Ghostly Realm.

Who could have expected the woman who caused trouble everywhere to show up, Liliana could not help glaring at Ena.

"In order to reflect on this incident, Ena will temporarily return home to be educated. So before I left, I just wanted to greet you all..."

Hearing Ena's words, Shizuka showed a questioning expression that seemed to say "what is this about?"

Reluctant to explain to his sister, Godou swiftly said: "don't mind it."

"Though all sorts of major... well, not too major things happened, I don't think we really mind. The next time we meet, I hope we can get along better."

Changing his words midway, was due to recalling the tragedy of Chidorigafuchi.

Though Godou was the world renowned Campione, he was still delicate in certain areas.

"Yes, it is for sure. Ena will get along with you all in the future, it's a promise!"

"Yes, much appreciated. Erica, is it ok? I have already made peace with her."

"Sure, since Godou has already spoken, I will turn a blind eye, and forget your mistakes."

Erica shrugged.

If that's the case, Ena's farewell greeting should be coming to a close, but just as Godou thought that, Ena's expression suddenly became seductive.

"...So, from today onwards, it's fine if Ena becomes one of Kusanagi-san's 'women', right?"

"M-my what!?"

"Brother! This person has said something unbelievable, what is going on again!?"

Shizuka yelled out while Erica, Yuri and Liliana silently watched the two, deep in their own thoughts. Godou simply felt troubled.

"Actually, that was the whole reason why Ena came in the first place. Since Kusanagi-san risked his life to save me, and caused Ena to fall in love with you. Also, Kusanagi-san has obtained the Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi, right? That is Ena's partner, so why don't you accept it along with me!"

"N-no, besides how come I didn't know that I have gained something so dangerous!"

"But that is the truth... Though Ena is still a little afraid of doing erotic things, but kissing is completely fine. Do you want to have another go? Right now?"

"K-kissing, what is that all about! Brother, what is going on!"

As Ena approached and Shizuka questioned, Godou looked towards the other three as if pleading for help.

Great, this was now the time to win his trust.

Liliana coughed, and began to speak calmly.

"Kusanagi Godou, it looks like you are trying to act coldly towards this girl who wants to enter your harem. This is not like you. You should accept her with the usual attitude, as fit for the dignity of a king. As for little sister Shizuka, I will explain to her later. Please leave it to me!"

Though it was not something she wished willingly, now was the time to let him witness the acceptance in her generous yet sorrowful heart.

But her master held his head in his arms instead.

"Liliana, do not make things worse with those kinds of words!"

"Godou, that woman is no good. Though I can forget the suffering she brought me, I cannot agree to let her serve by Godou's side!"

"That is correct. Ena you have to watch your words and actions, do not make things hard for Godou-san!"

True autumn was rapidly approaching, but the chaos and commotion surrounding Kusanagi Godou probably won't calm down for the time being.

Afterword

It's been a while, everyone.

This work has finally reached the fifth volume. For this series to have continued so far, it was all thanks to everyone's support. Here I express my utmost gratitude to you all.

So in this volume, the second meeting of some kind of judgment council was held.

Actually, the contents of the first judgment council meeting has already been published.

In the official website of Shueisha's Super Dash Bunko, there are specials for many of the works under their banner. The "Campione!" special is also quietly being released.

Those who haven't read them, should check it out some time.

By the way, about those little booklets given out for free in public events which contain unpublished series or short stories. The one who makes these booklets is H-san who works at the editorial department of Super Dash Bunko. With sorrowful eyes, he has complained to me saying "those take a lot of work" as he made those masterpieces.

People who have received these booklets, please be mindful of H-san's efforts, and don't throw them away.

Actually, I have many ideas locked away in my mind that probably have no direct effect on sales.

Though some of them have been published as short stories, but it is just the beginning.

For example, there is the short story 'The Night of Milan Where Only Men Watched "Magical Girl Sorami,"' or 'RPG Stats of All Major Characters, the Highest Abilities Turn Out to be That Unexpected Person,' or 'An Abilities Chart Like an SLG, the Numbers are so Expected, Too Boring,' as well as 'Living Legends of Campione.'

...Though it sounds like bragging to be coming from me, but these are all treasure troves of ideas that do not help sales.

Perhaps these may one day be released on the internet or through other forms. However, to this date there hasn't even been a blog or website under the name of Taketsuki Jou.

No, I am a novelist after all, perhaps it would be a good idea to do a blog?

But then again, right... Even before beginning, I felt it was troublesome to update... No no, it's the pressure of having to provide fresh material to everyone regularly, that has given me pause against taking the first step.

If readers are willing to do anything to see these ideas, you can try imitating our friends at the '15x24' commemoration panel event who attacked Shinjou-san and chief editor Marutakara, and relay to the editorial department of Super Dash Bunko your precious opinion...

Also, '15x24' is very interesting, would it be possible for me to get a first glimpse at the already written Volume 6? No? I see...

Back to the topic at hand, Volume 5 was the prologue of the 'School Saga,' though the developments were kind of mediocre.

Though certain parts were censored, but what I mean by mediocre is just compared to the average level of the series in general.

A reaction to this may appear in the next volume.

Most likely it will be the named characters so far, caught in a chaotic battle with this god or that god.

If the opportunity arises, let us meet again in the intense battles of Volume 6.

Taketsuki Jou, October 2009



■こんにちは！
挿絵担当のシコルスキーと申します。

今回はひそしぶり（？）のような気がする
日本編ということで
某騎士さんがせうらあ服姿で登場します。
うーん、制服が思つた以上に映えますね。
あと、ついに念願の静香ピンの絵を描けて
幸せ！丈月さんには私の趣味がバレている
ようで怖いデス（笑）

ではでは、また次巻にフ～。



Authors Introduction

著者紹介



たけ づき じょう
丈月 城

友人と最近、

いま面白いのは『湯けむりスナイパー』と

『ホワイトアルバム二期』だという話題で

熱く語り合いました。

ウイップ。

シコルスキー

そろそろプロフィールに生年を書きたくなってきた

神奈川在住のイラストレーター。

S57生まれ。

部屋の天井に届くまで本を並べて

地震に怯えつつお仕事しております。

 **スーパーダッシュ文庫 丈月 城の本**

カンピオーネ！ 神はまつろわす

カンピオーネ！ II 魔王来臨

カンピオーネ！ III はじまりの物語

カンピオーネ！ IV 英雄と王

カンピオーネ！ V 剣の巫女



Characters Introduction

主要登場人物



くさ なぎ ご どう
草薙護堂

高校1年生。

軍神ウルスラグナの権能を有するカンピオーネ。

エリカ・ブランデッリ

《赤銅黒十字》の魔術師。

自称、護堂の「愛人」。

まり や ゆり
万里谷祐理

霊視の力を持つ媛巫女。

護堂の「正妻」と称される。

リリアナ・クラニチャール

《青銅黒十字》の魔術師。

護堂の「騎士」を自任する。

せい しゅう いん え な
清秋院恵那

当代随一とされる「太刀の媛巫女」。

さ や の み や か お る
沙耶宮馨

正史編纂委員会東京分室室長。

あま かす とう ま
甘粕冬馬

正史編纂委員会のエージェント。

くさ なぎ しづ か
草薙静花

護堂の妹。祐理の茶道部の後輩。

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Story : Taketsuki Jou

Illustrator : Sikorsky

Translator : zzhk, " ", She-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named

Editor : FetchTheDog, Wakusie, Chancs, Ichigo93,
and many others who is not listed in the
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